Sounds from Secret Chambers

Laura C. Redden

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Sounds From Secret Chambers.

BY

LAURA C. REDDEN,

(HOWARD GLYNDON.)

"From the deep chambers of the heart!"

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PREFACE.

IN letting these Sounds go abroad I hesitate whether to accompany them by that name which, adopted in a moment of girlish caprice, was fated to be the one by which the world should know me best, or by that which is rightfully mine.

I remember that the one will represent me to some, and the other to still others, while a few know me by both.

The two names are typical of my double existence as a woman and an author.

In my double character I give my rhymes into the hands of — may I hope that I shall find the terms synonymous? — friends and readers.

LAURA C. REDDEN
("*Howard Glyndon*").

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"SWEET BELLS JANGLED."

"Sweet bells jangled and out of tune."

SHAKESPEARE.

PRELIBATORY.

GLADDEST of all is he who gives,
Discovering that his gift hath grace,
For passeth straight into his heart
The joy of the receiver's face.

If I could lift to longing lips
A beaker filled with drink divine,
Or sing to yearning ears a song
That should be welcomer than wine, —

I should not blush to lift my voice
And bid each passer to my side ;
Nor, since I come unheralded,
Shrink back, lest favor be denied.

But I have brought a little thing,
And I am doubtful of its worth,
And, at the last, am half afraid
To show its nature clearly forth.

And if, despite my long delay,
I only cheat expectant eyes,

And you should give me formal words,
Not glad, enthusiastic cries,—

Ah ! lay it honestly aside ;
And I shall see my great mistake,
But, knowing my intent was sound,
I shall be patient for its sake !

Yet here and there a pensive smile,
Or, dearer, an impulsive sigh,
Shall pay me for the slights of those
Who throw my offering idly by.

And haply, if a tear should fall
Where some of mine have dropped before,
Then I shall know one heart, at least,
Has heard me knocking at the door.

But who will rise to let me in ?
And shall I be a welcome guest ?
A comrade and interpreter,
When all my errand is confest ?

I turn the key, I lift the lid,
I lay the casket on the sill,
And, wistful, linger at the door
To know the tenor of your will.

SWEET BELLS JANGLED.

I.

A GIRL'S SUBTERFUGES.

WILT thou be an ancient maiden?"
Say the matrons unto me;
"Wilt thou have no chubby children,
Clinging fondly to thy knee?"
"Ruddy matrons! happy mothers!
What are children unto me?"

"Wilt thou live alone forever?"
Say the matrons unto me.
Light I answer: "Who is single
Should be ever blithe and free.
Sober matrons! thoughtful mothers!
Liberty is sweet to me!"

"Youth is scornful in the sunshine,"
Say the matrons unto me.
"Drop thy kerchief, boastful beauty!
While thine eye is bright of blee,
Age is lurking in the shadow,
Age is creeping up to thee!"

And I answer, lightly laughing,
What the matrons say to me :
"I am given to Diana, —
To the huntress, fair and free, —
And the lumpy, lovesick Venus
Hath no follower in me !"

I AM nineteen to-day. I'm growing old.
I saw the merest phantom of a wrinkle
Between my brows this morning. Mother says
It is because I pore above my books
So late of nights ; and Mother does not like
To have me different from other girls,
Except that I should show the freshest face,
The prettiest dresses, and the readiest smile.
And ah ! how shocked she would be, if she knew
That I write poems sometimes, — nay, not poems,
But wretched verses ; that I 've even dared
To publish some of them. I signed them "Faith,"
And never was so flurried in my life,
Nor so exultant, as when first I saw
My rhymes — my very own — in black and white
For all the world to read ; and not a soul
Had even the least suspicion they were mine !
I hardly know what I would like to be ;
But then it is so grand to be a poet !
If I might be one ! "God ! how Art is long !"
Great Goethe says, and at his words I shudder ;
For I have done no more than play at work.

Can I do more? Can I stand all alone?
I do not know, and there are none to help me.
If Mother saw me musing, she would say
Something in substance very much like this:
"Go to your music!" or, "Go take a walk!
I hate to see you moping. It is bad
For any girl's complexion. Do you know
That Edward Mason marries Mary Grey?
And she will wear white satin and real lace!
And you left school a year before she did,
And might have had him." Yes, that is the way!
Leave school, get married, (just as well be buried!)
Have a fine house, and get one's life crushed out
In caring for it. Dust on the piano, —
And no book opened, — never time to think!
Then the babies come! — Is that wan woman there
The merry, pink-cheeked girl I used to know?
She dies at forty years, or thereabouts,
And fades from memory as she fades from sight.
What has she done but drag herself through life?
And Mother wants that I should be like this!

II.

I 'm sick of hearing so much about love!
I can't take up a magazine or journal
But 't is the same old story, — Love! Love! Love!
Whether in poem, prose, essay, or tale;
And all my music 's set to silly words.
There 's too much harping on this same old string,

I 'm tired of listening to it every day.
The boys and girls can talk of nothing else ;
And 't is the same with grown-up men and women.
I used to like such stuff when I was callow,
But now it palls upon me when I think
There are so many other things to talk of,
So many other things to think about,
So many more to pray for, do, and suffer !
And — stupidest of all ! — if any woman
Dares call a man her friend, and treat him so,
Straightway around her rises a great babbling ;
And all the babbling is of — Love ! Love ! Love !
Now, Clarence Dale has been my friend a year.
We 've read together, walked and talked together ;
Both understanding that we were but friends.
He 's all the friend that I have ever had.
(I have no fancy for fine school-girl frenzies.)
Older than me he is, by several years ;
Wiser than me he is, beyond compare.
He has the answers for my questionings ;
He helps me solve my problems, lets me lean
Upon his strength, and does not like me less
Because I am unlike the other girls.
He smiles — a little sadly — when I talk
Of the grand things that I would like to do,
But says a man should never try to hinder
A woman in her climbing, — rather help her.
Ah, how I bless and honor him for that !
How proud I am to have him for my friend !
And then to think that they should dare to talk
Of anything like Love 'twixt him and me, —
I can't endure to think of it a moment !

III.

HIS PICTURE OF HER.

SHE carries heaven wherever she goes ;
  An angel with hidden wings, —
She 's sphered about with a sweet repose
  That touches surrounding things.

You cannot look in her bonny eyes
  But your thought will warm and stir
With a thankful thrill, in its glad surprise,
  For the beauty born with her.

She 's the mate of all that is sweet and pure, —
  The birds, the stars, and the flowers, —
Her touch is delight, and her kiss a cure,
  In this briery world of ours !

There 's a light that lieth upon her grace,
  Like the sun on far blue seas ;
And her voice is as tender as her face,
  And like the harp of the breeze ;

And tender as either of the twain
  Her shapely and supple hand,
The soother and sweetener of pain,
  And the lily of all the land !

O, under her feet the roses bloom,
  Where only were thorns of yore!
She 's so bright that the shadow finds no room
  Where all was so dark before!

Till by Heartsease sown in this wilderness
  We reckon her years' increase;
For she knows the ways of Pleasantness,
  And finds the paths of Peace!

IV.

Sitting alone to-day, there came to me
A thought that vexed me, like a flitting shadow
That comes between us and the sun. It was,
"When Clarence marries, what becomes of me?"
I shall not marry; but can I expect
That he will keep like singleness of soul?
They say fair faces wile men's hearts away.
And yet I cannot think of him as married
Without a twinge of pain, — I am so selfish!

V.

TRANSFORMATION.

"But then you take my friend from me!"
  She looked into his eyes;
The shy, awakening womanhood
  Grown bolder from surprise.

"Who finds a lover needs must lose
A friend, however tried!"
"Choose you the lover or the friend!"
His deeper voice replied.

The shadow of some coming pain,
Of some mysterious ill,
Hung round her young, uncertain soul,
And made her falter still.

Ah! sweeter far to droop and dream
Above a love untold
And vaguely guessed, than when we count
What we may have and hold!

But this faint, lingering, strange regret
Her woman's heart construed
Into a longing for the ties
Of Friendship's graver mood.

"Ah! let me keep my friend," she cried,
"Whose gently guiding hand
Subdues my griefs and plans my joys,
With such serene command!"

"Mine is a man's impulse, and you
Are wiser in your way,
And cooler in your blood; but I
No medium course essay.

"Our lives must blend, or we must part,—
The fiat lies with you!"

She could not say, "Depart from me!"
For all that she could do.

"But I? I give you all," she cried;
"My life, my love, my soul;
The surety of my happiness
Goes into your control!"

An answering look, a clasping arm,
A passionate caress, —
Man's old reply to woman's words,
Nor yet believed the less!

VI.

He left me, slightly vexed, because
I made him promise not to tell, —
At least to wait till we should see
If all would work together well.

Because my mother does not dream
That we have thought of such a thing;
Not even though she saw to-day
Upon my hand another ring.

It is not what would please her best,
And I must try to smooth the way;
And I must have some little time
To think of fitting words to say.

VII.

FOUND.

Sitting together only yester-even,
A hush fell on us with the deepening gloom ;
To me it seemed as if the peace of heaven
Descended with the twilight in the room.
You drew my head down to your sheltering bosom,
And kissed the brow, so stirless in its calm ;
And then my passionate thought burst into blossom
On glowing lips : " Unworthy though I am,
Love me, Beloved ! "

The charmed world may lay her hand in blessing
Upon my young head's waves of sunny brown ;
But I shall sigh for tenderer caressing,
And Love must plait the laurels for my crown.
If up the heights where gleams the golden glory
Of royal souls my woman's feet should go,
Think not these lips could then forget the story
Now gushing from my wild heart's overflow :
" Love me, Beloved ! "

No, no ! If in the clamor of glad voices
Blending my name with high, exultant song,
I missed the tone that most my heart rejoices, —
The very sweetest singer in the throng, —
I would not care to listen any longer ;
You are all grace and melody to me ;

And, leaning on your life, my life grows stronger,
Your strength shall nerve me for Eternity.
Love me, Beloved!

How tenderly you meet the mute appealing
Of eyes that ever seek to read your own.
This clinging trust — this wild excess of feeling —
But, dearest, I have been so long alone!
Henceforth there is no good beyond my grasping,
No splendor that my earth-life may not take;
The passionate heart which to your own you 're clasping
Is henceforth sacred for your princely sake.
Love me, Beloved!

VIII.

I HAVE been poring over some old papers;
Some of my earliest writings, — school-girl things, —
And found this page, which reads like prophecy
In the full light that Love casts on to-day.
When I concluded to devote my life
To writing poems and to studying Greek,
I burnt a copy of it, — called it callow, —
And did not know that I had kept this one.

AVE CÆSAR.

How shall I know thee when thou comest, my King,
Seeing that thou wearest not thy crown abroad,
Seeing that thou sendest me no token-ring,
And that no mark is on thy forehead set?

Ah ! I shall know thee as my heart knows God !
And I affirm that thou art all for me,
As I thy queen and subject am for thee,
If that thou be not wrongly captive led
By any other woman's luring smile,
Nor lay on any other heart thy head ;
If thou canst live thy life apart awhile,
Waiting to have it perfected by mine ;
If so be thou canst bear this long, sharp cark
Which eats my heart as it consumeth thine,
While I go groping vainly in the dark,
Hoping to touch thy hand and find thee out,
And by thy love be robed and wrapped about,
And crying like a newly orphaned child
Because I do not grasp thee anywhere.
Or like to one who is in sleep beguiled ;
For ah ! in dreams what will not fancy dare ?
Be true to me, as to thyself thou 'rt true !
Be true to me as I am true to thee !
Keep sacred all thy tender ways for me ;
Keep the caresses of thine eyes for me,
And every thrilling hand-clasp, till I come,
Like one who staggers wearied toward home,
To hold my unkissed face up unto thine,
To feel thy strong life passing into mine,
Making me likewise strong, until my feet,
Like to my heart's responsive, steady beat,
Keep firm and even step beside thine own ;
And we walk on together through the world —
Never, ah ! never more to be alone —
With faces like unto the face of him

Whose life was haunted by a dream of treasure,
Which he went searching for throughout the earth,
Holding all lighter things of little worth,
Until at last he found it, one glad day,
Which it made sweeter than all flowers of May,
And took it up, and went his way with pleasure!

IX.

AN IDYL OF THE EARLY SPRING.

Oh! clear and calm and open as
The forehead of a sleeping child,
And blue and cool and far away,
The April heaven o'er me smiled!
The violets from their low, green homes
Peeped up, and patterned by its hue;
"We will be like the sky," they said,
"Forever pure, forever blue!"

Dropped through the branches of the beech,—
Unleaved and sear from wintry stress,—
The fervid kisses of the sun
Recalled the earth to blessedness.
And, startled from her long, white trance,
Abashed and scantly clad she lay;
Meanwhile the robin's glancing breast
Gave life and gladness to the day.

And where the creeping wintergreen
Its fruit in coral broidery weaves,
I found the shy arbutus hid
Beneath the crisp and russet leaves.
The fair patrician of the woods!
Their daintiest treasure, — pink and white!
As balmy as the myrtle flower
That sweetens the Italian night.

The vagrant brightness of the days
Had coaxed a freshness to the moss;
And many a brown and naked stretch
By maple blooms was blown across.
Like swarms of tiny wingéd things,
Clinging to branches bare and high,
Their tender scarlet clusters shone
Against the blueness of the sky.

There were mysterious gleams of white
Among the hollows, lying low,
Drooped over by dusk evergreens, —
But I could laugh at April snow.
I knew its fostering mantle hid
The darlings of the coming May,
When constant Nature should fulfil
Her premonitions of to-day.

And sudden, silver sweet, I heard
A bluebird singing in the hedge;
Near by a venturous wood-flower sunned
Its whiteness on a mossy ledge.

Therefore I could no longer doubt, —
So much was plain to eye and ear, —
And, thrilled with sudden joy, I cried,
"The Spring, the pleasant Spring, is here!"

"But such a brightness never shone
On hill and dale and stream before, —
Or else my eyes were strangely dull,
And could not see so well of yore!"
That rogue, the bluebird, as I spoke,
Proclaimed my secret far and near;
Out of his merry heart he sang:
"Be glad! For Love and Spring are here!"

X.

This used to be a problem unto me:
Can woman's life hold Art and Love together?
And now I know it can! Not one heart only,
But one soul and one mind are shared between us!

XI.

I stood at early dawn beside my window,
So glad! so glad! His ring was on my hand, —
I could not sleep for the joy of feeling it, —
I leant out to the dim and dewy day,
And heard the first faint sounds of waking birds;

And saw the hills in shadow, and the deeps —
The blue, unsounded deeps — of restful skies
Unsunned above me. Then to me a voice —
A timid voice afraid of its own self,
A voice that sang the sorrow of a heart
That could not choose but suffer — floated up.
I caught the song, but could not see the singer.

XII.

A GIRL'S AFTER-SINGING.

When I was a wee white maiden,
I was my mother's delight ;
She plaited my yellow tresses,
And she cuddled me close at night.
But once I woke in her clasping,
And felt that her arms were chill ;
And they took me away from my mother,
Because she lay so still.
The buttercups shine in the meadow,
And her grave is wet with dew ;
A sparrow is chirping near it,
Alas ! what shall I do ?

Love came, and sought me, and found me !
He entreated me passing fair ;
It was for him that I braided
The jessamine into my hair.
He pelted me once with a rosebud ;
When I stooped to where it lay,

He departed, and only left me
The flower that he flung away.
The bloom is all over the orchard,
While I sit here and sew;
So sorry for sweet Love's going,
Alas! what shall I do?

Pale Christ! I 'll put thy betrayal
'Twixt me and my miseries twain;
Thou wert forsaken, — and I am
A motherless creature in pain!
Dear God! I will take thy pity,
And wrap it about my life;
O, let me be thy little one,
Since I 'll be no man's wife!

XIII.

And it is well that I had wit
To counsel silence and delay;
And he has owned that I was right,
And things have proved it so to-day.

It is his father's wish that he
Should spend abroad at least a year,
Before he settles gravely down
Into a well-worn office-chair.

His cousin — he is Clarence too —
(I always quiver at the name;
And never can remember that
So many others have the same!) —

His cousin makes the tour with him ;
  But then he says that *we* shall go
When we are married ; then he kissed
  Away the sudden overflow

Of rebel tears that would not wait
  Till I should find myself alone ;
I thinking that he would be gone
  Till next year's clematis was blown !

I know that all his friends would think
  He would be wiser to go free ;
And if the thing were known, he says
  'T would make a tedious time for me.

He will not have me set apart
  Like pictures placarded as "Sold" ;
He is not jealous of the state
  My unclaimed maidenhood can hold.

And, guessing some of her designs,
  I sadly fear my mother's frown,
Since Robert Graeme has fancied me, —
  For he 's the richest man in town.

XIV.

BENEDICTION.

Good by, good by, my dearest !
My bravest and my rarest !
I bless thee with a blessing meet
  For all thy manly worth.

Good by, good by, my treasure!
My only pride and pleasure!
I bless thee with the strength of love
Before I send thee forth.

Mine own! I fear to bless thee,
I hardly dare caress thee,
Because I love thee with a love
That overgrows my life;
And as the time gets longer
Its tender throbs grow stronger:
My maiden troth but waits to be
The fondness of the wife.

Alas! alas! my dearest,
The look of pain thou wearest!
The kisses thou dost bend to give
Are parting ones to-day!
Thy sheltering arms are round me,
But the cruel pain hath found me.
What shall I do with all this love
When thou art gone away?

Ah, well! One poor endeavor
Shall nerve me while we sever;
I will not fret my hero's heart
With piteous sobs and tears.
I send thee forth, my dearest,
My truest and my rarest,
And yield thee to the keep of Him
Who blessed our happier years.

Once more good-by ! and bless thee !
My faltering lips caress thee.
When shall I feel thy hand again
Go kindly o'er my hair ?
Let the dear arms that fold me
One last sweet moment hold me ;
In life or death our love shall be
No weaker for the wear !

XV.

Gone for a year and a day !
I am like a bird that guards an empty nest,
And flutters in and out, and cannot rest, —
Gone for a year and a day !

XVI.

DRIFTING APART.

Out of sight of the heated land,
Over the breezy sea ;
Into the reach of the solemn mist,
Quietly drifted we.

The sky was blue as a baby's eye
When it falleth apart in sleep,
And soft as the touch of its wandering hand,
The swell of the peaceful deep.

Hovered all day in our sluggish wake
The wonderful petrel's wing —

Following, following, ever afar,
Like the love of a human thing.

The day crept out at the purple west,
Dowered with glories rare ;
Never a sight and never a sound
To startle the dreamy air.

The mist behind and the mist before,
But light in the purple west,
Until we wearied to turn aside
And drift to its haunted rest.

But the mist was behind ; and the mist before
Rose up like a changeless fate ;
And we turned our faces toward the dark,
And drearily said, "Too late!"

So, with foreheads fronting the far-off south,
We drifted into the mist,
Turning away from the glorious west's
Purple and amethyst.

For the sea and the sky met everywhere,
Like the strength of an evil hate,
And a thunder-cloud came out of the west,
And guarded the sunset gate.

Thou art in the royal, radiant land
That stretcheth across the sea,
And the drifting hours of each weary day
Take me further from thee!

XVII.

HALF AWAKE.

Sleep ravished me from pain, and laid a hand
Cool, quiet, and heavy on my smarting eyelids !
My soul fled from the clamors of the land,
Nor heard the distant portals close behind it.

When I awoke, the brightness of the day
Had slipped from off the green earth's tranquil visage ;
And in my darkened room I freshened lay,
And Ease had wrapped me in its welcome mantle

Befringed with cheerful thoughts, and fancies sweet
That it had gathered in the realm of visions,
Whilst I therein had walked with soundless feet
Over pale asphodels and poppies crimson.

Sometimes a lone bird in its darkened nest
Makes broken twittering before the dawning.
Perhaps a leaf, wind-stirred, has brushed its breast,
But its faint chirps are for its absent comrade.

Thuswise my heart lay half awake in me,
Before the mist of dreams had faded wholly,
And, stirred by half-reminders, groped for thee,
With drowsy calls and murmurous cries unworded !

XVIII.

A LOVE-LETTER.

All the day was dark and weary, freighted down
with shadows dreary.
Other shadows kept the sunlight from the threshold
of my heart;
Failure in its circle held me; by its mighty magic
spelled me.
Ere one hurt had ceased to rankle, some new prickle
made me start.

"Letters!" and I, wholly broken, turned in hopeless-
ness unspoken:
"Doubtless, other stripes to smite me — Lord! my soul
is sore enough!"
Then I forced my hand to take them, but I scanned,
ere I would break them,
All the seals, — for I was growing cowardly through
long rebuff.

Till my spirit-broken seeming was enlightened by the
gleaming
Of a dear familiar writing, by a dearer hand devised.
When the arms that ache to hold us only may in dreams
enfold us,
What a blessing lies in letters then I wholly realized!

O my talisman in sadness! O, my pledge of coming gladness!
O my letter! tempest-drifted over briny billowed seas!
For the sender's sake I bless you, for the sender's sake I press you,
To my trial-chastened bosom, — be its comforter for these!

Ah! I know whose letter this is! there 's embalméd freight of kisses, —
Not the weapon that I dreaded in your travel-battered sheath.
You will feed my incompleteness, with your hivéd hoard of sweetness,
When I peel away the cover and pluck out the fruit beneath!

Yet my eyes with tears are filling, — my awakened pulse is thrilling
To some far-off spirit signal; and I shiver, unaware,
As the wavelets of the river to the zephyr's kisses quiver;
Is my darling thinking of me in the distance, over there?

XIX.

Trouble on trouble! When he went away
It seemed as if my darkest hours began.
My life since then has been much like a day
Bright at the dawning, — very early clouded, —
I sometimes think the clouds will never lift!
First: father failed and we lost all we had;

And he was old and could not stand the blow,
And never tried to lift his head again
After our home was sold and we came here.
I never wore a black dress in my life
Till I got this one, and it seems so strange
That it reminds me every day of father!
I have no time to think about myself
Except of nights; and then I cannot sleep
Because of all my sore perplexity.
I must do all I can for mother now;
She can do nothing for herself at all;
But sits and rocks and moans and sighs all day,
Or holds my little sister in her arms.
And I am glad that I must think for them;
For had I time to sit with folded hands,
I think I should go crazy with the strain
Of all this waiting!

XX.

How long is it since any letter came?
Now that I think, 't is full three months to-day.
I cannot hear a word of him by chance,
His father's house is closed, — they are away.

XXI.

WAITING.

The first, glad day of summer saw our parting;
Our hopes were vague, our words were very few.
I murmured — from your passionate hold upstarting —

"I 'll wait for you !"
Ah, I was brave, and life was all before me —
My love should make it beautiful and true !
I said,— when passionate, parting pains came o'er me, —
"There is so much to do !"
Come home ! dearest, come home !

The summer waned and anguish fell upon me,
Such heavy loss as wears the strength away !
And for a time its greatness seemed to stun me ;
And so I lay
Weak and bewildered, with one wish forever
Haunting my nights and darkening my days :
That I might fall upon your breast, ah, never
My head therefrom to raise !
Come home ! dearest, come home !

A homesick child, lost in the dreary gloaming,—
Such lone estate is haply like to mine.
My eyes are weary waiting for your coming ;
My sun is slow to shine !
Do you remember, dear, that charméd season
When your strong arm upheld my faltering feet ?
When Life was set to rhyme, — unchilled by Reason —
And O ! so blissful, sweet ?
Come home ! dearest, come home !

The red-leaved glories of the ripening Autumn,
Sun diamonds flashing on a dimpling sea,
These pleased me once : these now I cast no thought on, —
You are away from me !

And I am very weary of this sorrow —
Where are you ? O my best beloved friend !
And must I ask to-morrow and to-morrow, —
And what shall be the end ?
Come home ! dearest, come home !

I know too well, unless some cheering token
Comes o'er the sea. I am not less than brave ;
But want and doubt and toil, uncheered, unbroken,
Lead swiftly to the grave.
Yet you are dearer far to me than heaven ;
And while you live, I feel I cannot die.
Pray the dear God will smooth what is uneven
And bring you by and by !
Come home ! dearest, come home !

I live my life as you would have me live it
If you were here and earth were glorified ;
For you will turn again, I do believe it,
And seek my side.
When you come home you 'll find me worthier loving, —
Pain and endeavor keep as pure and true, —
And O, remember in your farthest roving,
I wait for you !
Come home ! dearest, come home !

XXII.

NO LETTERS.

I SAY at morn, "I shall have one to-day" ;
I say at night, "I shall have one to-morrow" ;

But day and night go creeping slow away,
And leave me with my sorrow.

And is he sick? or is he dead, or changed?
Or, haply, has he learned to love another?
If I could know him careless or estranged,
My pride my love might smother.

Last night, indeed, I dreamed a letter came.
Ah! welcomer than any first May blossom!
And then I heard my mother call my name,
And hid it in my bosom.

And, cheated, woke, and heard the night wind rave,
And hid my wet eyes in my lonely pillow;
And dreamed again, and saw a nameless grave,
Half hidden by a willow!

XXIII.

Oddly enough, that which I care for least
Of all our trials, mother thinks the hardest.
True, we are very poor; and now we live
Away from town in such a tiny house!
At first it seemed like living in a trunk.
It is the merest shell, with rooms like closets,
And narrow hall-way and still narrower stairs;
And such low ceilings! But 't is fresh and clean,
And almost pretty; and there is a garden.
My sister Kathie races round and round it,

And says it is a garden for a doll!
But we are quiet, and that pleases me;
And I am glad to work about the house,
And save our scanty store in many ways,
And make it go as far as well I can.
I think this no great hardship. I could lead
In full contentment such an humble life,
With love to sweeten it. But then my mother
Is never done with talking of past days.
And the few friends who still come in to see us
Have such blank faces, when their kind regrets
Are all cut short at seeing that I take things
In the most natural manner in the world!

XXIV.

NOT FOR SALE.

Come in from the desolate darkness,
Disconsolate heart of mine!
Come in from thy homeless wandering,
For a royal estate is thine!
Here is naught but a ring and a letter —
The key and the talisman —
To open the gates of that Eden land,
The fairest under the sun.
'T is only the old, old story:
I am beloved, of all!
He turns from the roses, and stoops to take
The violet nearest the wall.

The princeliest heart and the proudest
  Is lonely for want of mine,
Though queenlier brows may darken
  When he pledges me over the wine.
So, heart, come in, thou truant!
  For we have a cause to try.
Wilt thou go to this lordly master —
  This wooer who bids so high?
He offers us gold and diamonds;
  He offers us housen and land;
And all for a pledge of thy constancy,
  And a bond of this poor little hand!
Thou art weary and very lonely,
  O desolate pilgrim heart!
Thou art tired of living within thyself,
  From love and pleasure apart;
Thou 'lt be safely and warmly nested,
  Though the wintry winds should blow;
So spring to the arms of a faithful knight, —
  A lover, who loves thee so!

. . . .

Alas! there cometh a shadow
  Between me and the light —
A dear, kind face that for weary months
  Hath never gladdened my sight!
How could I forget that these faithless lips
  Are sealed with a sacred kiss?
How dare I to dream of another love,
  Whose heart hath been pressed to his?
Dear soul! though a wall as high as heaven
  Should rise 'twixt thee and me,

Though 'tween the hearts that fondly yearn
Should flow a boundless sea,
Still would I keep a stainless troth,
And a free, unfettered hand,
A loyal faith and a constant love
For my lover, of all the land!
So my heart stood up with a grievous cry,
Saying, "I cannot go!"
I may wander houseless and homeless,
But thou canst not cheat me so!
Ah, dear! It is weary wandering,
For the heart that has no home!
Ah, dear! It is weary waiting
For the feet that never come!
But I see not the gleam of my wooer's gold,
Love maketh my eyes so dim;
If I cannot be fair for thee, mine own,
I will never be fair for him!

XXV.

I HAVE sent him away: he comes back, and he will not
be banished —
He refuses to go!
He forever is near me and round me, and hovering
about me,
And he teases me so!
Does he dare still to hope for a "Yes,"
Just because I am weary
Of telling him "No"?

XXVI.

MY TALISMAN.

You took my hands in your two dear hands, —
O, but the night was a perfect night,
A sort of enchanted festival
Of music and flowers and light! —
You took my hand, and I was content ;
But I did not know what your petting meant
Till I saw the ring on my finger.

But the secret was out when I saw my hand, —
We never minded the night at all, —
It was only a little ring, you know,
But precious it seemed, for all :
So precious I 've kissed it a thousand times,
And thought it deserved a thousand rhymes,
And so does your love for me, love!

And my hand? Why, it seemed such a different hand!
It did n't look like my hand at all!
My eyes kept seeking it all the time, —
So cunning and white and small!
'T was all the work of that wonderful ring, —
'T was a priceless and talismanic thing.
Did I thank you with eyes or with lips, love?

Not then, you know, for we sat in the glare, —
O, but the night was a perfect night! —

But I sat still in a trustful calm,
Wrapped in a deep delight,
Nestling warm and close at your side,
Looking up at you with a pleased pride,
And my heart was as blithe as a joy-bell.

I looked up at you and down at my ring,
And I blessed the night in my thankful heart, —
You were so noble and good and grand,
And we were no more apart!
Ah! how happy you made me, love!
As happy as any brooding dove:
I could doubt you no more forever!

Many a night I 've gone to sleep
Caressing the hand that wears your ring;
For 't is ever to me a new delight, —
A sacred and lovely thing!
'T is long since I looked upon your face;
I hunger and faint for its tender grace:
The smile wastes off from my own, love!

"Even this too shall pass away!"
Was graven once on a monarch's ring;
But mine shall outwear my life, I know,
By my sick heart's fluttering.
But all the while that it slimmer grows,
And my cheek gets whiter, that once was rose,
You grow dearer to me, love!

Love shall endure, though the ring may wear;
I wait while the days and the months go by;

Days and years are the same to me, —
I am yours until I die!
If I never look into your eyes again, —
If Prayer and Patience and Pain are vain, —
They shall bury my ring with me, love!

XXVII.

TIDINGS.

And this is why he did not write!
And this is why he does not come!
And I have kept my troth-ring bright,
And sat and pined for him at home.

And would have waited fifty years,
Or would have died in maiden white;
And he will bring his bride with him,
For they have told me so to-night.

A Spanish girl with velvet eyes
And arching foot and supple nerves;
Rich lips that utter sweet replies,
And figure full of maddening curves!

What matter that my heart is true,
Since lips and cheeks are worn and pale;
And since my eyes are dimly blue,
What can my tenderness avail?

But it was weeping made them dim,
And I will sit and weep no more ;
That ever I should weep for him ! —
Ah ! there 's my mother at the door !

XXVIII.

Ah, cruel ! cruel ! cruel !
I cannot lift my heart from out this slough
Of dead, dank hopelessness. The whip and spur
Of kindling pride avail not. O great God !
Canst thou let such things happen ? Canst thou let
One human trust another, as I did him,
And in the midst of trusting be betrayed ?

. . . . .

Last night I saw him in my dreams ;
So pale my heart was almost broken ;
I read within his eyes the thought
His sad, sad mouth had left unspoken :
"I love you !"

In my sleep I said,
"And left me !" laughing bitterly ;
And suddenly the phantom turned
And hid its pleading face from me.
But still around me, in my sleep,
"I love you !" seemed to stir the air ;

To which I — laughing bitterly —
Made answer from my hard despair :
"Ah God ! That I had never known
Such love as yours has proved to me !"

XXIX.

My mother cut me to the heart to-day,
By saying that I had it in my hand
To give back to herself and Little Sister
All the advantages that they had lost ;
And that I would not !

XXX.

MY HOUSE UPON THE SANDS.

Because the heavens were blue above,
Because the ocean was so fair,
In its far-off immensity
I built my mansion there !

"But know you not," a seer said,
"In storms those placid waves may rise, —
That cruel, treacherous, shining sea
May break its smooth disguise ?"

"No ! no !" my trustful answer ran :
"This sheltered spot it cannot reach ;
Its waves will all their fury spend
Upon the lower beach."

And so I built, and shaped, and planned,
Until my house stood fair to view ;
Long time my willing heart found work
For willing hands to do.

It was so dear, — so fair ! so fair !
That little house upon the sand, —
It had not pleased me half so well,
Built on the solid land !

For here the white birds made their nests ;
And here the sunshine stayed all day,
To burnish up the plumy crests
Of infant waves at play.

" Not yet, not yet its lord has come !
I deck it for him while I wait ;
My heart keeps guard before the door
In honor of his state.

" And every time the sun goes down,
His feet are one day nearer home ;
I count my rosary of hours
In patience till he come.

" And when his feet the threshold cross,
And when my hand is in his hand,
There will not be a happier house
In all this happy land !

" And I shall lead him through its halls,
And show him all its pretty rooms,

And nestle shyly to his side,
  Amid the twilight glooms!"
. . . . .
The wind! The wind! The cruel wind, —
  And ah! the hungry-mouthéd wave!
From out the wreck, one floating thing
  I could not even save!

I stand alone upon the sand,
  Bereft of all my heart's delight;
And look around and note the work
  Of one black, bitter night!

My house! the fruitage of my care, —
  The labor of my heart and hands, —
Cemented with my life's best things,
  And — built upon the sands!

Gone — lost! for ever, ever lost!
  And I am standing here alone.
Of all the riches of my house,
  There is not left a stone!

And he, for whom the house was built,
  Is turned away — and will not come.
The day is changed, and he is changed,
  And I am pale and dumb!

I have no home in all the land,
  No heart on which to lay my head.
Such rest as now I crave is found
  In one low, narrow bed!

XXXI.

TEMPTED.

They will not let me rest, — I am so weary! —
My mother talks from morning until night
About this marriage she would have me make;
And he is kinder now than e'er before;
And sends me books and flowers; and will not slacken
His coming for my sharp, capricious moods;
And says I am more beautiful than ever,
And talks of how he loves me, while my heart
Is torn 'twixt love and pride and jealousy, —
I wish that I were dead and all were ended!

XXXII.

Well, let me look the truth full in the face!
I cannot part my living from my loving,
No more than I can take from off my finger
The ring he put there. For I tried to-day,
And could not do it. It was just as if
Some unseen hand withheld me.
I 'll never see or speak to him again;
But I have ceased to lie to my own heart.
I love him! Let it be. But then I love him
As we do love the dead and out of reach!

I CANNOT write
Unless I write my heart out! Not unless
I use my tears for ink, my sighs for pens.
And who wants anything like this sad song
That sang itself together in my brain
Last night, while I lay chafing in the dark,
One throbbing mass of nerves, both eyelids propped
So wide apart I could not make them shut?
For, such revenges rebel Nature takes,
When suddenly she deftly slips from out
The long, strait-jacket we have swathed her in,
During formal days when formal looks are on us,
And makes reprisals for our tutoring!

XXXIII.

VIOLET TIME.

ONE morning, in the past sweet time,
The hand I loved and trusted most —
As tender as an olden rhyme,
That grieves for something precious lost —
Was sharply wrested from my own,
Although my truth was free from stain.
I had not learned to walk alone;
So, filled with wonder and with pain,
Childlike, I turned me, but to see
The heart where late my head reposed
Would prove no more a home for me,

Since heart and arms were coldly closed.
My feet were young and tender then,
Not hardened for the stony way, —
They 'd only trod upon the flowers,
And on the velvet grass, at play, —
'T was long before they learnt the skill
That deftly threads the thorniest road,
And finds a pleasant pathway still
Where rasher feet have bleeding trod.
Yet, O, young hearts that bleed and break!
Hearts with your first sweet hopes betrayed!
For your sad sakes my heart shall make
A shrine, where its first hopes are laid.
For your dear sakes my pride shall bow,
And reverent pity light my eye, —
Ah, violet time! so faded now,
Your angel long since passed me by!

XXXIV.

He lingers long away — so much the better!
I 'm like a timid player perking for
A difficult part, in an unwonted dress.
Then let me have my time to get mine perfect,
So that he will not miss a single shade
Of the composure that I ought to learn.
His cousin, talking near me last night, said
They should not look for him for months to come.
It is his health that calls for longer stay.
His health? Indeed, I cannot comprehend.

With love and everything to make him happy,
'T would be more natural that he should be well!
I caught no word of his fair foreign wife, —
Indeed, I hardly ever hear his name,
Nor go where I can hear it, since his friends
Are hardly mine.

XXXV.

SURMISES.

His love I measured by my own, —
  Alas! the heart of man,
So swift to thrill, — so swift to change, —
  Crowds years into a span!

The strongest fires burn soonest out, —
  And he could thus forget!
And only pities me sometimes,
  Because I love him yet!

Ah, well! I fear 't is often so;
  The man will go his way,
And count his gains and freight his ships,
  Forgetting but to-day!

But woman? she must gather up
  Her hopes — those brittle things —
And all her work is to undo
  Her life from where it clings!

XXXVI.

We are so very, very poor, indeed!
What will become of us? Until I tried,
I thought it would be easy to find work;
And now I say, "God help the struggling poor!"
I never fully pitied them till now.
With all I know, I cannot earn a cent!
I write and write, and send my work away,
And all comes back to me with brief regrets, —
Story or poem, it is all the same.
Ah! I perceive that fingering of the lute
For our own pleasure is a different thing
From singing songs to earn our daily bread!
Poor mother cried herself to sleep last night.

XXXVII.

Well if I,
Being so unhappy, have it in my power
Out of my misery to make these others
In their ways happy; have I any right
To listen to my heart, whose full consent
I know that I shall never, never gain?
Either way, my day is clouded. I'm so little worth,
What matter if I give myself to bondage?
My life is no good to me any more, —
Then let it be of some good unto others!

They may make a bridge of me and walk across it
Into the kingdom of their hearts' desire!
I should be glad of this; but I 've forgotten
How to be glad of anything; and I
Am far too weary; and I only ask
That they should leave me quiet with my grief,
When I have promised everything they wish.

XXXVIII.

I TOOK my pen to-day and could not write.
My grief has drained the fountain of my thoughts.
Alas! of such poor stuff are made no poets.

XXXIX.

IT is to be!
Last night he followed me
Out into the dark and dewy garden walk!
So still the place,
I, seeing not his face,
Caught every least vibration of his talk.

He did not know
How sadly, long ago
My heart had forgotten to thrill to passionate words.
Nor understand
That never another hand
Might wile responses from its slackened chords.

I, sitting pale, —
The darkness for my veil,
Like one, who, leaning at the water's side,
O'er the surges' roar
Hears from the further shore
Far words, borne faintly forward o'er the tide, —

In silence drooped,
Until his head he stooped
So near, I felt his breath upon my cheek.
The old, old pain
Woke suddenly up again ;
It was for memory's sake — not his — I did not speak !

And while he bent above me, all at once
The moon came forth and lighted up the place ;
And ere I was aware, his face became
An awful revelation unto me,
Because it showed me how his love was set
Upon me — like the tides of some sad sea,
That spend themselves upon a cold gray shore ;
And spend themselves in vain, and still return ;
And still return in vain, and will not cease
From circling about the sullen shore !
And in the simile I read our fates :
He was the sad sea — I the sadder shore !
But when he yearned towards me — when he moved
To draw me to his bosom, all my heart
Within me sickened ; and I lifted up
A faltering hand — my shield 'twixt him and me —

And laid it on his shoulder, while I spake,
And while I trembled very grievously :
"I have no heart to give you. If I had,
I do believe it would be yours of right,
Seeing how you regard me. Pity me,
Because I cannot love you ; and forgive —
Because I am the source of all your pain !"

"You have no love to give me ? May I ask
If you have given it to another man ?"
From out the deeps of my despair I moaned,
"Be merciful, and do not question me !"
"Only once more !" he urged ; and I could see
His face was ashen, as of one who staggers,
Death-sick, beneath a weight he cannot carry ;
"And O, forgive me ! Does he live, this man ?
Or is he dead ?" And then his searching eyes
Devoured my face in silence.
"He is dead," —
I would have said — "to me" ; but a strong pang
Sprang up and stabbed me ; everything grew dark ;
And then I felt his kisses on my hands.
And he was saying : "O my heart's delight !
Let me but love and tend you in your need !
I will be very patient — will not ask
That you shall love me, till I teach you how !"
He held my hand so that the moonlight fell
Full on the ring that Clarence kissed and placed
Upon my finger, kissing both again.
"May I wear this," I said, "beside your ring ?
I cannot take it off."

He turned his face away before he spoke ;
Then said : "Do as you will, —
But let me love you !"

XL.

INTERPOSITION.

A BRIDE ! But not a wife ! there came
A message flashing o'er the wires :
"If you would save your house from shame,
Be here before the month expires."

He had but time to kiss my lips
And strain me strongly to his breast,
And leave me mistress of the place
Which late I entered as a guest.

And he must travel night and day,
Nor slacken till he numbers ten ;
And it will be a month, at least,
Before he comes to me again !

XLI.

A WEEK had passed since he whose name I bore
Had left me. I was glad at need to have
A fair excuse for shutting out the world ;
And doubly thankful for the short reprieve
His absence gave me, ere my strange, new life

Began in earnest. On this sunny morn
I felt my heart drawn towards the little house
Where yet my mother lingered, though preparing
To give it up and come to live with me.

There was a bench beneath a cherry-tree,
Which now I knew must be one cloud of bloom.
I thought that I should like to sit an hour
Upon that bench, and let the sunshine warm me.

And so I left my grand new home and went,
And kissed my mother; while our Kathie clung
About me, in her small impetuous way,
And followed me into the budding garden,
To show me where the blackbird had his nest,
And presently forgot me in her play.
So then I sat and watched the bustling bees;
And with the sounds and scents there fell upon me
A half contentment; and I put my hands
Together quietly, and softly thought
Of all the many things that I would do
In expiation of my one great lack, —
The lack of love for him who loved me well!
"But I will be so kind, so kind!" I said,
"And never cross or vex him any way;
And try to make him happy; and who knows
But God will smile upon my sacrifice,
And let me find my happiness at last
In giving up my will to other wills!"
And then the tears that spring, but do not fall,
Stood gently in my eyes. I think it was

My heart's protest in favor of itself,
Or some unheeded impulse of self pity.
But through these tears I saw a sudden shadow;
And lifting up my eyes — there stood before me
The same pale Clarence of my warning dream:
Only, his pallor did not plead, but threaten!
I saw the coming tempest in his eye,
But could not comprehend. "How came you here?"
I no word more could say from out my stupor.

"It is your fault," he said; "I did not know —
Until I came. I went to Locust Grove;
Found it deserted; but a neighboring gossip
Spoke of your father's death, and thought your mother
Was living here. I did not catch your name
Until I saw her; then she told me all,
(As she would tell it to some chance acquaintance!)
And bade me come and see you in the garden!"
"And you!" I said, as one who talks in dreams,
"How did you dare to come? Why have you come?"
And as I spoke I put my hand before me,
The back towards him, and the two rings gleaming
Upon the wedding finger, with no thought
Of anything except to keep him off.
He saw his ring upon my hand, and started
Fiercely — as if to strike me. "How dare you
To wear your troth-ring, when your troth is broken?"

"If it was broken, 't was not first by me";
I answered swiftly; "and of all the world
You are the last one who should dare to taunt me;

Because, in spite of all that you have done
To turn my heart against you, it was weak
And spiritless, and clung to its old fealty,
When hope was dead and love was almost crime,
And would not let me fling this ring away!"

"In spite of all that I have done!" he cried;
"What have I done but love you night and day,
Through silence and long waiting and despair,
And ill reports and sickness? And you ask
Why I am here? I came for love of you!
What else could bring me? O my God! my God!
I can't believe it! Are you this man's wife?
How could you turn against me without cause?
Who slandered me? Why did you cease to write?
When first your letters did not come I wrote
And wrote again, and would not be rebuffed.
And then in Naples I was smitten with fever,
And could not write, since I was ill for weeks.
When I was strong enough to read my letters,
The first one that I took was from my sister;
And in the midst of other idle gossip
I saw your name. She wrote that Robert Graeme
Was courting you. And I fell back and read
No more that day, — and not for many days!
And just as soon as I could leave my bed
I turned straight homeward"; here he clutched a tree.
"Ah! better far if I had stayed away!"

"I heard that you were married." "I!" he said;
"Ah! now I know you never loved me well!

Else you had not believed it, save from me, —
It was my cousin Clarence!"
And then I
Recalled to mind how mother had come in
From church one Sunday evening, and had told me
That she had heard young Clarence Dale was married, —
His bride a Spanish girl, and beautiful.
And while she talked, a friend of ours dropped in,
And said the same thing over; and I never
Stopped once to think about that other Clarence!
(They called him oftenest Clarence L., to make
Distinction 'twixt him and his senior cousin.)
And I, made conscious by my well-kept secret,
Dared ask no questions; tacitly accepting
The tidings as they came, and shaping them
To meet the strong forebodings of my heart!

Now I began to see what I had done,
And suddenly, resolved to know the worst, —
Like one who, driven toward a precipice,
Which he conjectures, though he cannot see,
In sheer despair goes forward to the brink,
And parts the green mask of the undergrowth,
And looks straight down into the dizzying ruin
Which gapes to gulp him, —
"And you wrote?" I cried;
"I got no letters after the first month."
And then I saw the wonder in his eyes,
While he was saying: "Why, I wrote and wrote,
Unmindful of your silence; sending all
To the address you gave me!" And then I

Cried out at once, "But the address was changed!"
"You did not write me so." "Indeed, I did!"
"Well then, I got no letter. I suppose
That mine have gone where all dead letters go,
In our well-ordered service of the post!
Dead letters! Ay! For they are dead indeed!
To us they 're doubly dead. But had you waited,
I might have told you all that there was in them;
And we had smiled, saying, 'No great harm is done'!"

Now when I thought of all the bitter days
And bitterer nights those letters would have saved me,
Though his reproach was just, I could not bear it.
And with no word that could express my pain,
I dropped my head between my trembling hands,
And the great deeps of woe were broken up!

. . . . .

XLII.

AWAKENING.

THERE is no hope for us in all this world,
Nothing to do but part!
I give up every hold on life and love
When I resign your heart!

It is too late, too sadly late, to meet;
So touch my hand and go;
Come never near me with those fatal eyes
That pain and thrill me so!

Come never near me! 'T is my only plea,—
Depart! Leave me alone!
Lest every worldly tie my spirit break
And claim you for my own!

Away! away! I hold my passionate heart
Beneath a feeble hand.
How love and pain are wrestling for my life
You may not understand.

Why did you come to darken all my fate
With hopeless, fond regret?
Why should the sunrise glory of my soul
So early fade and set?

Forgive me; soothe me with a tender touch,—
But one, before we part.
I may not even ask you, O my friend!
To wear me next your heart.

I am not quite so selfish in my love,
So senseless, so unjust.
Forget; and be your noble self again,
And true to every trust.

I must not let you love me, tenderest friend!
Forget; be glad again!
I want to give you all the joy of life,
And take the lonely pain.

Too late to meet, because one sad mistake
Has come between two souls!

We may but clasp reluctant parting hands
Across the gulf that rolls

Between our lives — God ! is it kind or just ?
But I am mad with pain,
And all the teachings of a prudent lore
Fall dull upon my brain.

Let me lean on you for a moment's strength,
While I accept this cup.
My life 's one love ! my heart is broken now,
Else I could not give you up !

I AM as one who passes from the heart
Of some great storm into the silent dark ;
For grief is not less grief because it broods
In stillness o'er a fate which first awakened
But breathless writhings and despairing cries.
I hardly know what happened at the last.
He was upon his knees beside me pleading
For love as if for life. "You are not his !"
I heard him say. "In the face of God and man
I claim you. Leave him ! Let me act for you.
Why should we care for what the world will say ?
What is the world to us, if we are right ?
Are we not all the world unto each other ?"

And I, 'twixt sobs and shivers : "Go ! go ! go !
For I should break my mother's heart and his !"
"Then you will rather break your own and mine ?"

"Not yours! not yours! Go and forget me, Clarence!
For I deserve from you no other thing.
O, I will pray to God that this may be;
Even as I asked him once to let you love me!
Leave me alone to suffer for my fault.
Go and forget so mean a thing as I!"

"And have you read your heart and mine so little
As not to know one pain must thrill us twain,
One fate must smile or darken over us?
In life or death we cannot be divided, —
One spirit moves us, one desire invades us.
I will not touch you while you bear his name,
So fear me not; and for your sake — not his —
I give all honor to this worthless bond.
But break it! See, my arms are waiting for you!
One hour of courage and the worst is over!
I dare not stay, — I cannot trust myself, —
I go to wait until you call me back.
O, shame me not by any faltering!
Great God! to think this man should have my right
At his disposal! Free yourself of him,
Or I shall kill him!"
Then my mother's hands
I felt about me, — and I knew no more!

XLIII.

TWO LETTERS THAT WERE NOT SENT.

I.

O THE long pain of faithful hearts !
By fate unconquered, how they yearn !
If strong, they bear an aching life ;
If weak, they break, yet, breaking, burn.

With ventures wrecked, with love denied,
With pain's fruition long delayed,
While o'er the waste of future years
I glance and turn away dismayed.

The fierce regret for what is lost, —
The deep, undying tenderness !
The hatred of unworthy self,
With no sustaining, fond caress !

And all the glory gone from life !
And all the earth so dull and cold !
The bitter nights ! the dismal days !
The suffering that maketh old !

But you are mine, — forever mine !
For soul will seek its kindred soul ;
I send you from me, but my heart
Will never own my will's control.

I have no fear of broken faith ;
If I have doubted, that is past ;
I know you noble, — 't is the false
Who find forgetfulness at last !

I am not worthy to be loved,
But I am faithful to endure ;
My penance is this lonely life,
And our eternity is sure !

II.

Well ! and the busy day is done,
And I am alone at last ;
Only myself to please to-night, —
But O, to forget the past !
Because I cannot, I never shall care
To know I am fair again ;
Because I cannot, these weary nights
Have shrivelled my life with pain.

For my soul goes out with a cry for you,
Trying to find the way
Out of this gloom, where the shadows are,
Into the perfect day.
My soul goes out with a cry for you :
" Come back ! for I die of loss,
And there is no strength in my crippled life
To carry this cruel cross."

O, my soul is forever calling to you, —
Crying and calling in vain, —
Weeping and wailing and calling to you,
Till living is only pain.
It is harder than death to feel and to know
We must each walk a different way,
And the fate that is walling me out of your life
Grows stronger from day to day.

And often I think I would gladly lie
Down in my winding-sheet,
Rather than battle and struggle alone, —
Rather than lose you, my sweet!
But I know I 'm too young and too strong to die,
Too brave for a coward's part;
But what shall I do with my empty hands?
And what with my haunted heart?

I know there is work for willing ones,
And I offer my sacrifice, —
Living henceforth outside of myself, —
Though the penance may not suffice.
Sometimes my name will mix with the sounds
Floating over your busy life,
And I know that my face will haunt you then
One moment amid its strife.

But, love! my dearest! this hopeless loss
Has smitten my soul to its core;
Naked and bleeding lies the life
So strongly rooted before.

I stretch my arms through the pitiless void
To find you, wherever you are ;
And I shiver and pine in this desolate waste,
Since you are forever afar !

XLIV.

THE MEANING OF A SIGH. (*His.*)

My soul is invaded by many thoughts
Of thee, of thee !
Like the sweet white buds that fall in spring
From the citron-tree.

Ah ! if my arm were under thy head,
On thy lips my lips,
What should we care for the cruel past,
Its cheats and slips ?

XLV.

UNTIL THEN. (*She.*)

We shall meet no more — no more —
In all the pleasant places of the earth ;
And yet thy seal is on me, and thy feet
Shall hardly keep from following after mine !

We shall meet no more, — no more !
But in the silent watches of the night

Thy heart shall hear the calling of my heart,
And in my sleep my face shall be toward thee.

We shall meet no more, -- no more !
And I shall only speak thy name to God,
But in my memory thy face shall wax
More beautiful and dearer, year by year.

We shall meet no more — no more —
Till some glad day I fall upon thy neck —
The world being past — and tell thee, without tears,
How life was but a groping after thee.

XLVI.

Alas ! alas !
He has come back, — pale, travel-worn, and haggard ;
For he has hardly rested night or day, —
He stayed not one hour longer than the needs
Of a vast business (whose prosperity
Hung on his coolness and his skill) required.
And he was wild to see me, and I shrank
From his caresses, — would not yield my lips
To his, was nearly frantic when his arms
Enfolded me. And silence fell between us.
He left me free ; and, looking in his face,
I saw that I had hurt him to the quick.
O heart of me ! my punishment is heavy.
Make it not heavier than my soul can bear ;
Be generous, God, — not just !

. . . . .

She 's mine ! And yet she is not mine !
I dare not touch her with my hand.
My wife ! and yet no more to me
Than any stranger in the land !

XLVII.

ALONE WITH THE NIGHT.

Ye shame me with such beauty, placid skies,
Cloud-broidered and thick-set with holy stars !
I turn away my hungry, tearless eyes.
Ah ! how ye shame the human's fleshly wars,
And spirits chafing behind prison bars.
I dare not shake this silence with vain cries,
Nor brave thee, Nature ! in thy vestal worth.
Shrinking, disfigured, guilty soul, stand forth !
— If so thou canst amid these sinless things, —
Forget thy ruined Paradise on earth
To list the song God's first created sings.

But lovely art thou yet, thou glad, green world !
O winds, with music-laden, odorous wings,
I scarce dare weight ye with these utterings !
Thou, my crushed heart — not altogether vile
Since such strange pain sweeps o'er thy quivering strings,
Since thus responsive to the plea she brings,
Thou meetest Nature's messages half-way —
Though all around thee lie the shadows gray,
Though sunk in night the gleam of life's young day,
Canst thou not burst and cast thy bonds away ?

XLVIII.

'T is terrible, — the life that we are leading,
And I begin to fear him. . . . .
He grows so jealous, moody, and suspicious,
As if the very heart were changed within him.

XLIX.

LIVING APART.

All day I go the round that 'customed feet
Have shaped and hardened so,
I read, in brightening eyes, how life is sweet
When love's June roses blow.

With quiet hands I do my daily task,
And wonder at this calm ;
And wonder if the peace I dared to ask
Comes dipped in Lethe's balm.

Till some chance word, some faintest memory-flash,
Brings one forbidden face.
The past, the present, — how they war and clash !
One's pain, one's tender grace !

I can keep down the swelling of my tears
Through all the busy day ;

But then the bitter nights! — to think for years
I may not put away.

This face, which, finding not, my longing eyes
Seek in each crowded street;
Low welcomes, of which memories arise,
I spring no more to greet.

How shall I live? It haunts me everywhere, —
This face, — and yet "No more!"
Is written on the future, foul or fair,
And hope, not love, is o'er!

L.

I CAN no longer bear it, — I will speak
And tell him all to-night, though he should
Kill me.

LI.

WHO KNOWS?

If she had not found him so cruelly cold and so narrow,
And if, when she laid her white cheek on his shoulder and shivered,
He had not burst out with a gibe, which went home to her heart like an arrow,
Who knows but from all that came after they had been delivered?

But he knew that her heart was not his, and he had a suspicion
That she meant to make duty stand forth in the place of true loving ;
And her kindness was worse unto him than its total omission,
Since he made it avail him his doubts of her fealty in proving.

I DID not dare to tell him, after all.
For the first time, he cruelly repulsed me.
Default of kindness, my weak lips were sealed ;
I went unshrived unto my lonely pillow
I meant to tell him all, and ask his counsel, —
Leave him the right to judge and sentence me.

LII.

IT is not to be ! I feel it is not to be !
I have made a path, but cannot walk in it.
Nor will I vex myself with longer trying.
I wrong all three by this deceitful silence,
Will make all three unhappy if I carry
The falsehood further. He will grow to hate me.
Worse could not be. So I must dare to leave him.

LIII.

A WOMAN'S HEART.

CHIEF contradiction of all contradictions
A woman's heart!
In the same breath she saith "Cleave unto me!"
And then "Depart!"

And when the words are said that send you from her,
With what a start
The poor, fond thing revokes her "Nay!" to nestle
Upon your heart!

LIV.

REVOCATION.

COME back! come back! for the light went out
When thine eyes looked away from my own!
Grieved and weary, I wander about,
So tired of being alone,
So faint and friendless, away from thy side,—
Come, dearest, and take my hand;
Forget that its clasp was ever denied
To the tenderest one in the land.

Come back! come back! with the spring's sweet prime
With the birds from over the sea;

For I turn mine eyes from the sunlit time
And my ears from its melody.
For my soul, in its need, cries out for a day
Ere my heart fell away from thine, —
Cries out for the cup that I pushed away,
Spilling its golden wine!

Come! and thy look shall kindle again
The faded flush of my cheek, —
Come! and read in my eyes the pain
That my lips are too proud to speak, —
Come! for my heart at thy mercy lies,
Stabbed with a yearning wild
All for thee! and for thee it cries
Like a poor little frightened child!

LV.

And having made my mind up to the worst,
I found my heart was lightened of its load.
"It will be terrible for him at first;
But he will see the utter hopelessness
Of any good from such a tie as ours, —
Nay more, that I should sin and he would sin
In living together, seeing that I love
And am beloved of another man.
I will acknowledge all my wickedness —
For weakness is a sin in such a case —
In that I let myself be overborne
By worldly counsels and belied my heart.

I will be patient, speak he ne'er so harshly —
For I deserve the bitterest rebukes, —
But I will sin no further. I will break
From this unholy tie at any cost,
Even though he curse me for it. Well I know
That scandal will be busy with my name,
And all my summer friends will quit my side,
And my poor mother! — that hurts worst of all!
But I must bear it, since I do deserve it.
And I will go away and hide myself,
And let the world forget me. By and by
We two may come together, and then life
Will just begin for me. I cannot think
That this is wrong, because we love each other;
Only 't is hard that three must suffer first,
The guiltless with the guilty, all because
Of my wrong-doing."
Thus I planned the future.

LVI.

My heart! why wilt thou be so sad?
Have we not had our fill of sorrow?
Can I not bribe thee to be glad,
Or think a little of to-morrow?

LVII.

BECAUSE OF A LETTER.

I.

"DARLING!" he wrote, — and then before his eyes
There came a sweet and gracious woman's face,
And in his ears a voice whose low replies
Were all denials one while in the past.
But when we love how can resistance last?
And when we love we will not any more
Give heed to things that moved us much before.

II.

So he wrote "Darling," and perhaps he kissed
That little word for lack of kissing her
Upon the gentle hand, which his so missed,
And on the mouth that waited ripe for him,
And on the eyes, sweet, though with weeping dim, —
And had no presage of those other eyes
Which should the letter on its way surprise.

III.

Ah, little herb, with which Titania's lids
By spiteful Oberon were rubbed so well!
When lovers love, and all the world forbids,
What wicked fairy culls you for their bane,
Making them blind to all the world's disdain,
Letting them see but one another's faces,
And only those in very crowded places?

LVIII.

OPPORTUNITY.

And while his soul was full of hate,
  And while his brow was dark with wrath,
He lifted up his eyes and saw
  His rival standing in his path.

And maddened at the radiant face,
  And at the calm, triumphant air, —
To think the very man she loved
  Should dare to stand before him there!

LIX.

ONE MOMENT.

The devil that hides in the heart of every man
Leaped suddenly out of its hiding-place in his.
And then, in the breadth of a little moment's span, —
For it takes no longer to kill than it takes to kiss, —
The thing was done that never can be undone:
One was standing up and the other lying stark;
And a woman, sitting and musing in the sun,
For a moment wondered the day should turn so dark!

LX.

PRODUCED IN COURT.

But now I wonder if this man who wrote
  Could have foreseen the things that were to come,
Would not the heart within his breast have smote
So sore upon him that this faded note
  Had never left his hand beyond recall,
  Fixing the fate of three for once and all?

Would he have said, "Ah, love so fair and sweet!
  Die now. 'T is better thou shouldst die than I.
'T is better thou shouldst die than she should live
To beg of death what life no more could give"?
  Would he have tossed this letter in the fire,
  And turned the key on passionate desire?

Or, standing up, have faced the worst and said,
  "Through all annoys I go to make her mine.
I 'd rather she would kiss me, when I 'm dead,
And plant pale-hearted roses o'er my head,
  Than live to pass me on the other side.
  Life is too cheap if heart's bread be denied!"

What is impossible to him who loves?
  Nothing but this, — to force Amen from God.
And not the faith for which the mountain moves
Can thrust effect out of its natural grooves.
  If love could put all life in one strong kiss,
  It could not cure one little wound like his!

LXI.

UNTO THIS LAST.

I.

Have I not borne
The trials of an adverse fortune well,
Giving no sign by which strange eyes might tell
Of the sore heart within?

II.

Have I not seen
The hands that should have helped me turned away,
Leaving me, sole, to bear this bitter day
In my own strength alone?

III.

My failing hand
From the sweetest aims of life had loosed its hold;
Peace left me as I grasped her garment's fold,
And came not back again.

IV.

Not this! not this!
Why leave for me this last drop in the cup,
So deathly that I cannot drink it up
Without a quivering lip?

V.

God! God!
This proud, high heart is bare before thee now!
Low in the dust I lay my defiant brow.
I did not know of this!

VI.

I 'm conquered now !
The waves go over my defenceless head,
My vaunted strength is gone, and in its stead
Sitteth a white despair.

VII.

Life is so dead !
And the Hereafter, all untried and new,
So tempts me now, that all I want to do
Is to hide myself and die.

VIII.

Look on me, Thou !
To whom I turn a still and tearless face.
I have no prayer to move thee in thy place,
But — thou art Just !

LXII.

OUT OF TUNE.

O, BEAR with me, for I am mad !
I cannot look upon the skies,
I hate the looks of friendly eyes.
What awful things doth God devise,
In spite of all our piteous cries !
I cannot tell the night from day,
I know not good apart from bad,
I know not what is sad or glad,

Nor if a wish I ever had.
Forgive me, God! I 'm worse than mad!
Forgive! I know that I, myself,
Am the sole cause of all my pain.
Have pity on my broken heart,
Have pity on my wretched brain!
It crisps, like deserts void of rain, —
I think I ne'er shall weep again.
Forgive! Have pity on my pain!

LXIII.

THERE is no sweetening for the lonely lips
In thoughts long past kisses; no delight
In tracing out a face forever vanished
Upon the sombre canvas of the night!

LXIV.

A LATER MOOD.

THE sheep are sheltered in the fold,
The mists are marshalled on the hill,
The squirrel watches from his lair,
And every living thing is still;
The fields are gray with Immortelles!

The river, like a sluggish snake,
Creeps o'er the brown and bristly plain;

I hear the swinging of the pines
  Betwixt the pauses of the rain
Down-dripping on the Immortelles!

And think of faces, slimy cold,
  That flinch not under falling tears;
Meek-mouthed and heavy-lidded, and
  With sleek hair put behind the ears,
And crowned with scentless Immortelles!

The partridge hath forgot her nest
  Among the stubble by the rill.
In vain the lances of the frost
  Seek for some tender thing to kill;
They cannot hurt the Immortelles!

Sad empress of the stony fell!
  Gray stoic of the blasted heath!
Dullest of flowers that ever bloomed,
  And yet triumphant over death,
O weird and winged Immortelle!

Lie lightly upon Nature's breast,
  And cover up her altered face,
Lest we should shiver when we see
  The brightness of its vernal grace
Grown grayer than the Immortelles!

The wind cries in the reedy marsh,
  And wanders, sobbing, through the dell;
Poor, broken-hearted lover, he
  For violets finds the Immortelle!
The Immortelle! The Immortelle!

LXV.

WORN OUT.

You say that the sun is shining,
That buds are upon the trees,
That you hear the laugh of the waters,
The humming of early bees:
I am pleasured by none of these,—
I am weary!

Let me alone! The silence
Is sweeter than song to me!
Dearer than Light is Darkness
To the eyes that loathe to see!
'T is better to let me be,—
I am weary!

I have faltered and fallen,—
The race was but begun;
I am ashamed, and I murmur,
"O that the day were done!"
How can I love the sun,
Who am weary?

What will you do for the flower
That is cut away at the root?
If the wing of the bird be broken,
What wonder the bird is mute?
O, peace! and no more dispute,—
I am weary!

I will give you a token, —
A token by which to know
When I have forgotten the trouble, —
The trouble that tires me so
That I can no farther go,
Being weary.

When you shall come some morning
And stand beside my bed,
And see the wonderful pallor
That over my face is spread,
Shrink not. But remember I said
I was weary.

Then shall you search my features,
But a trace you shall not see
Of all these months of sadness
That have put their mark on me ;
Then know that I am free,
Who was weary.

For the Old must fall and crumble
Before we can try the New ;
We must taste that the False is bitter
Before we can crave the True.
This done, there 's no more to do,
Being weary.

Only to droop the eyelids,
Only to bow the head,
And to pass from those who are sighing,
"Alas ! for our friend is dead !"
But remember how I said,
"I am weary !"

LXVI.

LAST JUNE.

Could I help smiling? It was May.
I saw a snow-drift in the meadow;
Late Spring was minded so to play
At Winter; but there fell a shadow,
That was not born of gloom and sun,
Upon the greenness at my side.
I felt a shiver through me run,
And all the gladness in me died.

Pale wind-flowers trembling in the grass,
Each like an early blighted maiden,
Provoked regards no more, alas!
Since woodbines were all honey-laden.
The crocus withered on its stem, —
"But Summer shall supplant the Spring,
And tulips lord it over them —"
Was that the shadow of a wing?

I rose and crept across the place
Where I could smell the snow of flowers;
Its flakes were blown about my face
In sudden and delicious showers.
A-cold in May? My very lips
Were chill, in spite of song and shine.
I saw the shadow's slow eclipse
Creep up again: it was not mine!

LXVII.

But still I soothed myself in thought:
"My May is tarnished; well, what matter?
The fancies that my fears have wrought
The blessed winds of June shall scatter."
I saw a red rose half apart;
"And when her nun-like sister blows?"—
Alas! the anguish of my heart
Before I saw the first white rose!

I heard the robins in their nests;
I saw the blue gleam of the river;
Gruff humble-bees in yellow vests
Made all the apple-blossoms quiver.
A broken lily in the way
Was crushed beneath my careless foot.
"Thy hope," a whisper seemed to say,
"Is like a flower without a root!"

What matters it, this June, that red
And white rose-buds have burst asunder,
Since one is sad and one is dead?
How did my heart divine, I wonder?
Ah, shadows! shadows everywhere!
But then his grave is in the sun,—
Only, when I am crouching there,
It almost seems that I am one!

LXVIII.

NEAR EVENTIDE.

My flesh is weary ; but the way
  Lies nearer to the vales of Rest,
And slowly, slowly creeps the day
  Down to the threshold of the West.

Dear Father ! if thy love should send
  Some angel, full of pity sweet,
To nerve me for the coming end,
  He 'll track me by my bleeding feet.

I think, O Father ! — though my sight
  Discern no sign of help around, —
Thou wilt not hold my striving light,
  Nor give me any needless wound.

Thou wilt not blame the trusting heart
  That witless, blindly reaching out,
No blossom from its thorn could part,
  When thorns were set with flowers about.

Thou 'lt lead me from this evening land,
  And with a morning crown my night,
What time my victor soul shall stand
  Erect, transfigured in thy sight !

LXIX.

A HEART-SOB.

Only lay your hand in blessing
Kindly on my stricken head;
Kiss my weary eyes and forehead
And the lips to sorrow wed.
So — I ask no more, sweet mother!
With my face upon your breast;
If I slumber, do not wake me, —
I am weary and would rest.

And I 'll tell you where to lay me,
When I 'm fallen sound asleep,
That my rest may be untroubled,
Long and dreamless, still and deep, —
Where the maiden violets waken
To the kisses of the rain,
Bear me, in the dawning spring-time,
The freed prisoner of pain!

Where the young moss looks the greenest,
And the trees stand thick and tall,
And you hear the murmurous music
Of a hidden waterfall.
For I think I shall sleep sweetest
In the old woods, cool and dim;
Nature's being blending round me
In one grand, perpetual hymn.

When upon my careworn forehead
Rests the seal of endless peace,
And my mute lips smile in blessing
For this day of glad release, —
When I 'm lying, with drooped eyelids,
Heedless of the morning beam
Lighting up my lifeless tresses
Strangely, with its living gleam, —

Then remember but my sorrow,
And my strong, exceeding love ;
How with fiery pride and passion
Long my woman's nature strove.
Though I yielded, think how deeply
Late repentance pained my soul,
When the love I sought to stifle
Would not bow to my control.

O, forget my faults, sweet mother!
Let all bitter memories go ;
Thinking, with a Christ-like mercy,
How I loved and suffered so
That my passionate heart was broken
By a lot so incomplete ;
How without him life grew bitter,
Till, to reach him, Death grew sweet !

LXX.

A WOMAN'S voice,
So weak it makes you think of graves, is singing :

Some hearts that are too warm, too wild,
Must needs be broken for their good ;
Not till the artist's work is done
Is the design well understood.

And suffering sublimes the soul ;
So perfect peace will come at last,
And I shall know God's kind intent
When these sharp pains are overpast !

AND as for me, let all souls know my creed :
One God, one love, both strangers to betrayal, —
One sovereign heart which pities the mistakes
Of weaker hearts, and what they suffer here,
And does not stamp the petty frowns of Time
On the grand forehead of Eternity.
One God, one love, for this world and the next !
If He should will it so, one happy love ;
If we should mar our fates, yet still one love —
Though one unhappy love — that knows no change,
No questioning, no doubting to the end ;
Till two twin souls be free to lose themselves
Each in the other, in such natural wise,

Their guardian angels, even, shall not be able
To separate and name them!
Because I do believe, with all my strength,
That God will never wholly put asunder
Two souls that truly love, — that count not death,
Nor pain, nor shame, nor loss of worldly good,
As anything in face of that great need
Which draws them toward each other.
They may sin, and so put love to shame;
And if they sin, I know that they must suffer;
Suffering, if love stays with them, they are purified.
And though God may divide them in this world,
If they keep faithful, God himself is for them,
Since He is love. And if they are but patient
I know that He will mate them in that future
Where every atom finds its proper place
Because of sheer attraction!

BROKEN LINKS.

BROKEN LINKS.

OLD AND NEW.

A TOUSLED letter with broken seal ;
A dusty zithern with slackened strings ;
A shattered nest and a rotten keel ;
Distrust that sucketh the lives of kings ;
A heart that is cold to woe or weal ;
A bird that flutters on tired wings ;
The slave's dull pain that will not heal ;
And stones too heavy for him that slings ;
And a pulse too quick for the earth's slow swings ;
An ancient woman, whose quaverings
Shake the sense from her utterings,
With an "O for the light of the faded springs !
And alack for the fate of forgotten things !
And ah for the sorrow of what has been !
The world 's a flower with a worm within !"

A MORN fresh sprung from the loins of night ;
A song that is silver in all its rings ;
A heart that waketh for pure delight ;
And the first blue flower that April brings ;

And blind eyes looking at last on light ;
A foot that is free in its wanderings ;
A sweet bride hid in a cloud of white ;
And a hand that is loose on its garnerings ;
A lover that laughs at reckonings ;
A child just out of its leading-strings ;
And a true-eyed maiden who fearless flings
The sunlit hair from her brow, and sings :
"And it 's hey, for the light of the coming springs!
And it 's ho, for the bliss of unsounded things!
And it 's ay, for the rapture that is to be
In the world new blossomed for Love and me!"

January 1, 1872.

VIOLETS IN AUTUMN.

I KNEW I should find the Daisy,
With her forehead so brave and white,
For the sun is her lover, to comfort her,
And to keep her in beauty bright ;
And she folds the last of his kisses
In the golden well of her cup,
Then fearless sleeps in the frosty fields
Till the morning wakes her up.

And the purple Pink o' the mountain
Droppeth her velvet train
Where the stricken glory of forest leaves
Is shed in a scarlet rain ;

And nods to the late red Clover,
And the stoical Immortelle ;
And the timid buds of the Dewberry
Hide down in the sunny dell.

And I gathered the golden Aster
And the blossomy blades of grass ;
Each bowing low, like a courtier,
To let his lady pass ;
But the Violets ! — O the Violets ! —
I thought they were all asleep,
Each on her pillow of thistledown
In the pine wood dark and deep.

But they stood in hapless beauty
Under the sullen skies,
Each lamenting her mother, Spring,
With the sorrow of dewy eyes :
Five o' them, April's darlings,
On a bank of yellowed moss,
That long ago the south-wind
Had forgotten to blow across.

And I took these meek, sweet orphans,
Fair set 'neath emerald eaves ;
But all for the love of the secret dear
That was hidden among their leaves.
Five little heads blue hooded,
Your message was all for me!
And ye were its fittest carriers,
For all that ye were so wee!

October, 1869.

WHICH IS BEST?

WHAT if I saved from trampling feet
The drooping plumes of a wounded bird,
And tended its hurt with a gentle hand
Till its life new stirred?

What if it nestled against my cheek,
And tamed its shyness upon my breast,
Until I believed that it loved me more
Than its old-time nest?

And if some day, when I prized it most,
It should leave my hand with a sudden spring,
And cleave the blue of the summer sky
With a freshened wing,

And never pause at my pleading call, —
Never come back to my desolate breast, —
And forget I had saved its life, and forget
I had loved it best, —

Should I never open my arms again
To any helpless or suffering thing?
Never bind up the bruised heart
Nor the broken wing?

Better, a thousand times, to bear
A blow in place of an earned caress,
Than to turn aside into selfish ways,
Or to pity less.

Better the long abiding pain
Of a wronged love, in its sufferance meek,
Then the hardened heart and the bitter tongue,
And the sullen cheek.

1869.

THE LOOSING OF LILITH.

A LEGEND OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

"Lilith was Adam's first wife." — *Legends of the Talmud.*

HE was tired of strangling the hearts of boys
With the strands of her gold-red hair;
She was tired of blighting the innocent brows
Of babies lusty and fair;
So she said unto God, "I pray thee, Lord,
Let me wander upon the earth,
To teach new ways to the women there
Who are weary of home and hearth."

But the wonderful Mother of Christ, who sat
On the topmost step of the throne,
She looked up to God the Father and said,
When the words of Lilith were done:
"Now, for the sake of the Son I bore,
Let thy least handmaiden speak";
And she bowed her before the Father God
In reverence sweet and meek.

Then a great new light went flashing out
Through the mansions many and fair ;
And the seraphim glanced up Godward then,
Of His sudden smiling aware ;
And the dear Christ said to his mother mild,
"Beloved, the Father hears!"
And Lilith, she stretched her lithe white neck,
And put the hair from her ears ;

For the voice of Mary was sweet and low,
Like the wind by the river of God,
And she said, "My Father, I pray thee now
Loose not this creature abroad.
She hath troubled the sons of Adam sore,
But she hath not worked her worst :
O, let her not vex the daughters of Eve :
This was not written at first."

Christ looked in the Father's face, and then
Over his lips there flowed
The hidden thought of the Lord of heaven,
While the visage of Lilith glowed :
"They have forgotten thee, mother mine, —
These women who deafen the earth :
Let Adam's rejected teach them now
What a brawling woman is worth."

Straight out of heaven sped Lilith then,
With a cruel scorn in her eyes, —
She that was first made equal with Adam,
And that fell, being overwise.

It is not a new story now, you know :
They were too much alike to agree ;
And she wrangled and fought with Adam, until
God, pitiful, set him free,

And gave him to wife the meeker Eve,
Who sinned through womanly trust,
And who, in her sorrow for sin, was like
A sweet crushed flower i' the dust.
Therefore it had come to pass that Lilith
Sore hated the daughters of Eve,
Because to their mother, beloved of Adam,
Our God had given reprieve.

Concerning the doings of Lilith on earth,
If you 'll look abroad in the land,
You 'll see that the caldron of wrath is stirred
By her white and devilish hand.
Wherever she findeth a woman's heart
That is easy to trap or to win,
That will none of the meekness of Mary mild,
She straightway entereth in ;

And her image, it multiplieth fast, —
Too fast for the peace of the world ;
And Lilith meets you at every step,
Ribboned and crêped and curled.
Her marks are a sceptical, brazen brow,
And a hard and a glittering eye,
And a voice that striveth to fill the world
With its clamoring shrill and high.

Ah ! do you think that a Christ could be
Born of a woman like this ?
Is there any rest in the arms of such,
Whose lips are bitter to kiss ?
Woe for the little children that cling,
Unwelcomed, upon their hands !
They are only thinking of how their deeds
May startle the farthest lands.

When the fire goes out on the hearth at home,
And the chamber is left unkept ;
When a shadow that climbeth from heart to eye
'Twixt husband and wife hath crept ;
When the wife is shy of the mother's estate,
And maidens are counting the cost, —
It behooves us to think a little upon
The glory that Lilith lost.

If we go down to the root of the thing,
We shall see that they put Self first,
And that is the sin of sins, for which
Fair Lilith was greatly curst.
They are out of the shadow of the Cross,
And Self is their idol in life,
And it is not the voice of God they hear,
But of Adam's demon wife.

1871.

CHRISTMAS EVE CHANT OF THE BRETON PEASANTS.

IT was a dim, delicious night;
The earth, close wrapt in ermined white,
Lay languid, in the misty light.
The circling spheres were all in tune,
And, in their midst, the Empress Moon
Was brightening to her highest noon.
It was the night when Bethlehem's star
Guided the sages from afar.
It was the night when shepherds heard
The reverent air by music stirred.
It was the night of old renown,
When wondering angel-eyes looked down,
To see Christ's head, bare of its crown,
Within the manger laid!

. . . . .

There is a sound of thronging feet, —
What youthful crowds are in the street!
They go out from the stifling town,
They seek the white and lonely down;
They walk in silence, till they find
A spot where four roads straitly wind.
Where four roads meet, about a place
Made sacred by the Cross's grace.
There, men and maids, in separate file,
Do range themselves, nor speak the while,

Nor break the charm, by gest' or smile.
Till, sudden, breaks upon the air
A sound of singing, strong and clear, —
Thus chant the hardy Breton youths :

"What is new upon the earth ?
What fresh wonder goeth forth,
That its ways are full of pilgrims
And its dwellings full of mirth ?

"Sounds of gladness on the air !
Happy faces everywhere !
Tell us, O ye silent virgins !
Wherefore is the night so fair ?"

Then, silver-soft, the girlish voices rise,
And with the sweetness of their meek replies
Upon the frosty air breed melodies :

"Lo ! the sacred hour is near !
What was darkened now is clear.
Christ is coming ! Raise your voices, —
Say Farewell to Doubt and Fear !"

Resounding through the darkness, then,
Peal the deep voices of the men,
Who raise the solemn song again :

"Why is all the world abroad,
Raising midnight prayers to God,
Till the censered air is heavy
With its supplicating load ?"

Then clearer, purer, richer, rise
The hidden maidens' sweet replies,
Like wonders out of mysteries :

"Lo! the Prince of Peace is born!
Lo! on high the star of morn!
And it shall not fade forever,
Nor its brilliancy be shorn."

Then, in concord perfect, sweet,
Tones of youths and maidens meet ;
And they gladly sing together,
This auspicious hour to greet :

"Sing to-night, — for Christ is born!
Lo! on high the star of morn!
And it shall not fade forever,
Nor its brilliancy be shorn.

"Sing! deliverance from our woes,
By the blood that overflows
And renews the Son of Adam, —
He no longer burdened goes.

"Sing! because it is His feast ;
Join the Princes of the East,
Bring him gifts amid rejoicings, —
He will smile upon the least!

"Sing! while Christmas crowns ye weave ;
On the Cross a garland leave.
Lo! the World's one Virgin-Mother
Heals the hurt that came of Eve!"

BROKEN OFF.

MEN said unto a prince of story-tellers,
"Tell us another tale!"
And yet, beside the bells, stood phantom knellers,
And his voice was fit to fail.

At first he faltered, saying, "I am weary,
And the words are slow to come.
Across my ken flit visions dim and eerie,
And 't is sweet to keep at home!"

But the clamor rose, by many voices strengthened;
And one voice in his heart
Grew louder as the spring-tide shadows lengthened:
"Ah! 't is dull to sit apart!

"Be prouder than to wait with fingers folded,
Scared, looking out for death;
Drop not the habit which thy life hath moulded
But with thy lease of breath!"

He passed his hand across his heavy forehead,
And then across his eyes;
Before him rose a spectre, dim and horrid,
With terrible replies:

"The name by which men name me, while they shiver,
It is Swiftly Certain Death.

Leave all thy latest arrows in their quiver,
Or 'gage to me thy breath!"

Ah me! this prince of worthy story-tellers
Stood sad beneath the sun;
For he could see where stood the phantom knellers —
But the story was begun!

Some said, "It is his story of all stories";
And others: "Lo! he fails!
His later cannot match his earlier glories, —
He falters and he pales!"

But men pressed round him, eagerly, to listen;
And all else was forgot.
He coaxed the smile to shine, the tear to glisten;
And then — his voice was not!

The tale was but begun, — the web half woven,
The colors scarcely mixed, —
The cunning of his hand was not yet proven, —
His intent hardly fixed.

For the dark comrade who walked with his walking
Laid lightly on his lip
A cold forefinger, — and he ceased from talking —
Suddenly — without slip.

Ah! still lips locked on the mysterious story!
Ah! hand that cannot hold
The pen by which he earned his meed of glory, —
He 's dead! and 't is not told!

1870.

THE MISSING STEAMER.

BREEZE! thou hast swept o'er the stormy Atlantic,
Thy kisses are fresh with the salt of its spray;
Knowest thou aught of the ship that is missing, —
The ship that sailed bravely and blithely away?
Answer, O, answer!

Wavelet! the seething of turbulent waters
Sent thee to break on this still, sunny beach;
Say! did she yield to the storm and the darkness,
Or spread her white sails till they bore her from reach?
Answer, O, answer!

Where have ye drifted her, winds of the ocean?
Where have ye stranded her, waves of the sea?
What is the fate that hath claimed her and wrapped her?
Whisper, O, whisper the secret to me.
Answer, O, answer!

Thou that controllest the might of the tempest,
Thou that restrainest the wing of the wind, —
Thou, in thy ken, holdest all of this mystery;
Lift up the vail, and show what is behind.
Answer, Lord, answer!

For behold! there are hearts that cry out in the night-time,

That have no delight in the face of the day, —
Hearts that go out o'er the waste of the waters,
To seek for the ship that sailed blithely away.
Answer, Lord, answer!

1870.

DEAR MOTHER.

I LOCKED my hand in hers, and said,
"Let me go with her through this dark;
For all the good and ill of life
Has touched us with the self-same mark.
Some bitter pains I comprehend,
But not the absence of her love,
Whose deep, unfailing tenderness
Would any lighter friend reprove."

I called her, — but the mother-look
Was blotted out in Death's eclipse;
And, vaguely desolate, I shrank
Before those altering eyes and lips.
O God! since ever I could speak
My voice had fallen on faithful ears;
'T was "Mother!" in my triumph hour,
And "Mother!" in my time of tears.

I saw her going from my grasp
Beyond the boundaries of Time, —
Beyond the life her soul had made
Through love and suffering sublime.

I could not shield, nor share, nor save ;
She drifted deathward all alone ;
Her heart insensate to my pain,
Her ear unheeding of my moan.

Yet mother-love, rare mother-love,
Responsive in the throes of death !
The soul triumphant over clay,
Was victor of her latest breath.
Sudden into her darkened eyes
Flashed Love and Memory at the last ;
And then the spirit's radiance set,
And the dear face was overcast.

Only the shell which held the seed ;
Only the casket of the gem ;
But all the bitterness for us,
And all the victory for them !
For us, the deep, slow-closing wound ;
For us, the haunting pain of years ;
The dull, vague, aching sense of loss
Alternate with our passionate tears.

Not yet the creed of Faith can fill
This bitter want, these empty arms :
It will not soothe me *now* to know
That she is locked from life's alarms.
For when I see this pale, strange face,
So like, yet so unlike her own,
I only feel that she is gone,
And I must learn to live alone.

I know this is not Mother now ;
And yet I cling about this clay,
And watch to see that look break out
Which met me but the other day.
So calm! A furrow on the brow
Still lingers. 'T was the work of years ;
A mother's tears, — a mother's pangs, —
Mute token of a mother's cares !

Somewhere, I know, she waits for me,
In some bright nook of ageless lands ;
But O, I miss the fleshly proofs
Which craving human love demands.
To see her dresses laid aside,
To take the books she used to read,
And find the flowers she placed within —
O mother! this is pain indeed.

1864.

A PROBLEM.

TWO brothers at one mother's knee,
Kissed by the rosy fleeting hours,
Alike in boyish bearing free,
Laugh out among the morning flowers, —
The paths in which their feet are set
Unparted and unwidened yet.

They linger at that mother's side
Awhile with timid clinging hands,

Until the path grows fair and wide
And stretches into distant lands —
Alas for fancy's mirage gleam!
Alas for boyhood's broken dream!

And now, no longer hand in hand,
They wander singly, — far apart;
Alone, each treads the dangerous sand,
Or fronts the storm with dauntless heart, —
In thought and word how different they,
The two who in one cradle lay.

For one the path grew drear and strait,
And stones and thorns choked up the way;
The clouds, that hung like leaden fate
Above him, hid the light of day,
Save when the angry noontide glare
Fell on the head in meekness bare.

Poor feet! All worn and bleeding now.
But what a conquering soul looks out
From eyes serene — O hallowed brow! —
Undarked by any shade of doubt.
He faded in a calm devout,
Unflushed by grand triumphal shout.

The other followed out his fate, —
'T was written in his eagle eye, —
He stemmed a tide of wrath and hate,
And towered above it, lone and high.
Not for his feet the lowly ways,
With few to love and none to praise!

He climbed until he gained the height,
  He strove until he clutched the crown ;
Till — proved the stoutest in the fight
  And deafened with his own renown —
With tired heart and drooping lid,
He sank, — and from the world was hid.

Two souls, each costly with the worth
  Of Nature's inborn nobleness, —
With laurelled brow one trod the earth ;
  Alone, in darkness and distress,
The other toiled until the day
Gave place to evening's shadows gray.

Yet, when each glory-robed gate
  Its golden splendor flings apart,
And those two souls without them wait,
  Which hath the higher, nobler part ?
Both names are shrined in such an equal burst
Of angel notes, Heaven knows not which was first !

AN EMPTY NEST.

MINE is the song of an empty nest,
  Others will bring you braver songs ;
But mine must utter my heart's behest,
  Though I sing it to heedless throngs.

My steps were over the blenchéd leaves
  That had taken the frost's untimely kiss ;

Not long ago we 'd carried the sheaves ;
But the season was all amiss.

With hanging head and with loitering feet
Toward the open land I went,
Through places that summer had made so sweet
With a glamour but briefly lent.

I trod upon something soft and dry, —
For my eyes were full on the flaming west ;
And just where the grass was thick and high
Was lying — an empty nest.

O, what visions of faded spring,
O, what memories of silenced song,
Of brooding breast and of glancing wing,
To an empty nest belong !

And the thought that suddenly came to me —
Close to the water, facing the west —
Was of some singing that used to be
In another forsaken nest.

There were two birds that began to sing
Low in the fields of yellow corn,
Not for the heed their song would bring,
But for love of the dewy morn.

Birds of one feather, and sister birds,
Crowded out of a roof-tree nest,
Hatched within sound of lowing herds,
But flying away from the west.

Birds of one feather fare best together;
Singing they built them another nest,
Sat in it and sang, in the worst of weather,
Each loving the other best.

But we who listened one morning knew
That only one bird was left to sing, —
They never had sung apart, the two, —
And we talked of a broken wing.

Now, should you chance to walk that way,
You would vainly listen for any song;
But what regrets for the vanished lay
To this empty nest belong!

AN UNPREMEDITATED ANSWER.

S. S. C.

OU say that my songs are sad ones,
But O, is the world not sad?
How the sobs follow swift on laughter,
Before we have time to be glad!

We come into life with wailing;
When we love we are pale with fear;
The babe, the bride, and the dead man
Each give or receive a tear.

The sea is forever moaning,
And the pines forever sigh;
Would you mix with their plaint the laughter
Of so weak a thing as I?

IN ITALY.

IN ITALY.

ALMA MATER.

DELIGHT of my spirit, — Italy!
Shining across the sea!
I have broken the vow I made
Never to part from thee.
Pity me for my broken vow
Because of my breaking heart,
That is so sick for the lack of thee,
All ravishing that thou art!

My beautiful mother, — Italy!
Rose of a thousand charms!
Pain and Death I could laugh away,
Lying within thine arms!
Sweet mother! I could forget the hope
That found me but to slay,
And fret no more for the joy that was
But the changeling of a day!

All the others have played me false,
But I know thou art for me.

Nothing can hurt the deep delight
That cometh of loving thee.
Tender nurse of my starveling life!
Dear comfortress of my soul!
Once I gave thee half my love,
Now thou shalt have the whole.

I 'm pale for the lack of thy sunny skies,
I call to thee in my dreams.
O for the scent of thine orange-groves,
For the shout of thy silver streams!
The blood-red rose of the South will fade
In a clime that is overcast,
And thus I wither afar from thee, —
My best love and my last!

A NEW LEGEND.

THEY come from the North and the West and the East, —
Men that are mightiest and men that are least:
Where are they bidden, and where is the feast?
"'T is a fair dead woman we 're going to see;
And her name of names it was Italy!"

So they go down to the spicy South —
That is silent, because of her songless mouth;

And dreary, for even of tears there 's drouth —
To wonder and pity that such should be
The fall of her that was Italy.

And three princes of might there were with them ;
And the foremost, he kissed her cerement's hem ;
And he said : "She is broken off at the stem,
But a fairer flower we shall never see !"
And he wept because of her, — Italy !

But the second came tearless and nearer pressed,
And he sternly gazed on the stirless breast :
"She would not bend to my fierce behest ;
And she died in my gripe, for she hated me ;
So I helped to kill her, — Italy !"

But the third was unlike the second and first,
Though his face showed not how his heart was curst ;
For he hid his thought till in flame it burst ;
And he said to the others : "Let us see
If she 's dead or sleeping, — Italy !

"For 't is said that she grieved herself to death
For a boon that she craved with her failing breath.
Who knows but a life-throb lingers beneath ?"
So he called her — the fair, dead mystery —
By her name of names, which was Italy !

And he said to her : "Rise ! Behold the hour !
I will breathe into thee the breath of my power ;

I will help thee reconquer thine olden dower.
I will help thee to stand up fair and free, —
I thy knight, thou my lady, Italy!"

He bent him down to her dulléd ear;
And the soul, that was faint with hunger and fear,
Thrilled and wakened and turned to hear;
And she rose up, fair as fair could be,
And the world was glad of her, — Italy!

She arose in her palace of delight,
And shook from her eyelids the mists of night,
And walked again in her beauty's might;
And she reckoned with all the princes three,
But she kissed the third one, — Italy!

She kissed him closely, upon his mouth,
With the fast, warm kisses of eager youth:
"Come into my garden, that fronts the south!
There 's no sweet thing that shall not be
For my knight of the lilies," said Italy.

So they wandered away in the sunny weather,
In the groves of citron-blossoms, together.
At first she forgot to ask him whether
His love was a free gift, and if he 'd be
Helper or tyrant to Italy.

And she said to him, "You have made me free,
When I thought this never again could be;

But the seal of my bridal with Liberty
Is kept by my cursers away from me.
Will you help me to get it?" said Italy.

How heavily fell her heart! and O,
How salt were her tears when he answered, "No!"
But they changed to fire when she turned to go;
For he held her back, nor would leave her free:
In his strength he constrained her, — Italy.

She said: "I thought my sorrows were done,
And now I see they are but begun.
Of friends to help me there is not one.
I 've found a foe where a lover should be:
There 's death in his kisses," said Italy.

"His helping has burdened me overmuch
If my steps must turn at his guiding touch;
And fate of mine can never be such.
He keeps the crown of my pride from me!"
And she drooped for the shame of it, — Italy!

She sat in the dust, with her face to Rome:
"O thou, of princes and martyrs the home!
With thine unlit beacon, the great white dome, —
I am thine! thou art mine! And no good shall be
While they plot to part us," said Italy.

She raised her head up, and she said:
"Turin to serve me when I am wed;

But Rome for the crowning of my head :
There shall be no joy till this thing be."
And this was the burden of Italy.

She stretched her hand out, and she said :
"Milan to adorn me when I am wed ;
But Rome for the crowning of my head :
There shall be no singing till this thing be."
And this was the burden of Italy.

She walked a little apart, and said :
"Florence to tire me when I am wed ;
But Rome for the crowning of my head :
There shall be no feasting till this thing be."
And this was the burden of Italy.

She laid her hand on the hilt, and said :
"Venice to gird me when I am wed ;
But Rome for the crowning of my head :
There shall be no peace till this thing be."
And this was the burden of Italy.

She plucked the sword half out, and said :
"Naples to please me when I am wed ;
But Rome is the place of my bridal bed,
The seal of my glory and unity."
And this was the burden of Italy.

She set her feet in the path to Rome,
But the day and the hour were not yet come ;

And with face as white as the white sea-foam,
And soul that was anguished unutterably,
She turned away backward, — Italy !

"But I wait," she said, "by the light of the sun, —
I wait with my errand but begun ;
I wait with my crowning work undone :
There shall be discord till this thing be."
This is the last saying of Italy.

Just after Mentana, 1868.

THE SEQUEL TO "A NEW LEGEND."

AND still she sat in the road to Rome,
With her hungry eyes on the great white dome,
Mindless of riot and ruin at home,
Saying to passers, "Let me be :
Behold, I am she that was Italy !"

And hanging her head for sorest shame
At the growing dishonor of her name,
While the summers went and the winters came ;
And, passing, the world said, "Is this she
That was called by the name of Italy ?

"For she traileth her splendor in the dust,
And her sword in its scabbard getteth rust ;

And truly in her may no man trust;
And it shall only remembered be,
Hereafter, that she was Italy."

But she, with her head between her knees,
Was not moved for any of these
Reproaches, clustering thick as bees;
Only she said, "Now let me be,
Since Rome is riven from Italy.

"I am but a stirrer-up of strife,
Having no more delight in life:
I am as a jealous and unloved wife;
And thrift and quiet are not for me,
Since rot 's at the heart of Italy."

And now the darkness had come apace,
Blotting out from before her face
The things she had seen for a little space,
And the hopes she had hoped when, young and free,
Praises were sung for Italy;

When sudden and overflowing light
Ravished the darkness from the night,
And made it brighter than day is bright;
And she hid her eyes: "It is not for me,
Fallen, forsaken Italy!"

Then steadily to her startled ear
Answered a small voice, still and clear:

"Rise, for deliverance is near!
Come to thine own, if thou art she
That is called by the name of Italy."

She looked, and the gates were opened wide,
And the keys of Peter were at her side,
And the glory had clothed her like a bride,
And the dome was alight. "Is this for me?
Ah, then once more I am Italy!"

As one in a dream she entered, weak;
But they kissed her on lip and chin and cheek;
And all were too glad for any to speak, —
Wrapped in wonder that Rome should be
Safe in the arms of Italy.

"Wait a little!" she whispers low:
"The tide will come and the tide will go.
It will bring us Liberty in its flow:
Since we all gathered together be,
The rest shall be added to Italy."

She will put her crown upon her head;
She will smooth the silk of her bridal bed;
She will go out proudly charioted.
Peace and plenty for her shall be,
Since Rome is given to Italy!

February, 1871.

CLYTE LISTENING.

LOVELY and sufficing! fair wonder among women! —
For, lo! the gates of girlhood have softly closed behind thee, —
Why art thou lingering here, in the hush of rose-lined thickets,
Where the eyes of him that cometh shall surely seek and find thee?
'Mongst the honey-hearted flowers his snares are set the thickest;
And where thy feet are straying he shall surely take and bind thee.

Like a folded bloom, tide-taken, on smooth waters, to the ocean,
So, unknowing, toward the hidden, drifts thy virginal sweet being.
Ah, my lily-throated darling! are thine eyelids lotos-laden?
Else what is it that thine eyes are so afraid of seeing?
Thou hast heard him but in dreams, thou hast known him but in visions:
What is it counsels loitering when instinct counsels fleeing?

Little ear, that should but listen to the lowest of sweet whispers,
Late you seemed a perfect pearl from her amber hair outgleaming:

Now you're like the pinkest sea-shell of the warm,
blue Adriatic,
And the pale bud of her cheek hath caught your
brighter seeming.
Chin and temple and low forehead, even red mouth,
redder glowing:
O my blossom of all blossoms! with whose glory art
thou beaming?

Not a myrtle spray hath rustled in the pathway by the
fountain;
The tame dove hath not fluttered 'mid the ripe grapes
overhead;
But her neck is bent the way that his distant feet are
coming,
Though she stands as still and dreamlike as a phan-
tom of the dead;
And the startled heart that hideth in the white rose of
her bosom
Behind its lovely fastness hath leapt — hath heard
his tread.

A SICILIAN MIDNIGHT MADRIGAL.

IN Sleep's still mansion dost thou lie encloistered,
Thou Lily of my heart,
By the cool dream-waters, in the Hall of Shadows,
Thy sweetness hived apart?

Rare bud, unclose! shine out, my Star of Even!
We are waiting, all, for thee;
For the flowers of Earth and the gentle eyes of Heaven
Are keeping watch with me!"

Her head is quiet on her maiden pillow,
Her sweet eyes in eclipse;
But she thrills in sleep, through all her gentle members,
To her vermeil finger-tips.

"The wind of midnight prints its humid kisses
Upon my lifted brow,—
I pale with pleasure, faint with only thinking
Shouldst thou caress me—thou!
O pain of Love! desire, that smites with anguish,
And deep, delirious dole!
Stir in thy dainty nest, my bird! and listen
To the night-song of my soul!"

Her cheek gleams redder through the rich dark lattice
Of her deep hair's unbound grace,—
There is a look of hearing far-off music
Upon her trancéd face.

"The Hours go reeling, drunken with aroma,—
I am spent with odorous pain;
The citron petals that my feet are crushing
Fall in a nectarous rain.
The priestess Night takes up her mystic censer
At Nature's moonlit shrine;
My love consumes my life in costlier incense,
Beloved! to burn at thine!"

The dream-flush rises to her nun-like forehead,
She is troubled in her sleep.
One slight hand stirs, as if it sought another
To nestle in its keep.

"The deep strong pulses of the earth are timing
To the heavings of the sea;
But the old concord of my life is jangled
For the sweet sake of thee!
I could spell out the stars' mysterious meanings
By the light of thy dear eyes;
I could tell thee all that the flowers and winds are plotting,
My Rose of Paradise!

"Thou dost embody the unwritten poem
Of this midsummer's night,
O my Regina of the Perfect Presence!
My wonderful Delight!
Ah! to snow thee up in a shower of myrtle blossoms,
Heap violets on thy breast, —
And then, with kisses, part thy spicy covert,
To say, 'I love thee best!'"

Her languid arms unconsciously are lifted
In that caressing way
In which a white dove ruffles its soft pinions
On a happy pairing-day.

"Shall I not move thee from thy cold, white silence
By the strange strength of pain?
I will conquer all the allied worlds to clasp thee,
If thou love me back again.

My life is heavy, with its sole, sweet secret, —
Behold! I cry to thee!
Rise from thine Eden-dreams, sweetheart! and listen —
Listen! and answer me!"

Like a pale, pink bud flung on a moonlit snowdrift,
She sleeps in saintly white;
But her listening heart is panged with helpless yearning,
While his sorrow sweetens night.

SORRENTO, 1868.

MAZZINI.

I.

BURNING LOW.*

IS it true that the clear white beauty
Of the wonderful soul that shone
Through his face in a pallid splendor
Like the light from an astral zone,
Is clouded by disappointment
And darkened by grievous doubt?
Is it true that the light in the beautiful lamp
Is almost out?

Is it true that he hates the sunshine,
Keeping his face to the wall?
That his seeing is careless of any sight,
His hearing of any call?

* During the excesses of the Paris Commune, 1871.

That his quiet and feeble fingers
On the coverlet lie along,
Like those of a man who has done with thought,
With sob and with song?

Then, God that art good, I pray thee,
Roll back a little for him
The burial-stone of the sepulchre,
Where lieth so cold and dim
She whom he longed for living, —
She whom he deplores as dead
Because she lies so starkly still
With bruised head.

Show him a little, I pray thee,
That she is only asleep.
So haply this wan, fond lover
Shall find the heart to weep; —
Seeing that she, though wounded,
Shall amend her by and by, —
And, being thus shaken 'twixt joy and sorrow,
Shall forget to die!

1871.

II.

OUT.

A LIGHT is out in Italy,
A golden tongue of purest flame.
We watched it burning, long and lone,
And every watcher knew its name,

And knew from whence its fervor came :
That one rare light of Italy,
Which put self-seeking souls to shame !

This light which burnt for Italy
Through all the blackness of her night,
She doubted, once upon a time,
Because it took away her sight.
She looked and said, "There is no light !"
It was thine eyes, poor Italy !
That knew not dark apart from bright.

This flame which burnt for Italy,
It would not let her haters sleep.
They blew at it with angry breath,
And only fed its upward leap,
And only made it hot and deep.
Its burning showed us Italy,
And all the hopes she had in keep.

This light is out in Italy,
Her eyes shall seek for it in vain !
For her sweet sake it spent itself,
Too early flickering to its wane, —
Too long blown over by her pain.
Bow down and weep, O Italy,
Thou canst not kindle it again !

1872.

AT THE GRAVE OF KEATS.

I.

RARE, sweet singer!
I 've come by lone, untrodden ways
To linger near thy dust divine;
I have no polished words of praise
To laud those words of thine, —
Not "writ in water," no, dear heart!
Be comforted, sweet poet soul!
If so be that thy spiritual part
Reseek its human's goal.

II.

O rare, sweet singer!
I 've come to find thee all alone.
The grass waves high above my head,
As here I crouch and kiss this stone,
And grieve that thou art dead.
Couldst thou not wait a little while,
And scorn the critic's crabbed flout,
And patient toil for Fortune's smile,
And triumph over doubt?

III.

O rare, sweet singer!
And didst thou doubt thyself, in truth,
Beneath the scourge of mocking words,
That wrench the poet's heart like blows

Upon a cithern's chords?
But no! I deem it rather was
That fatal languor of the soul
Which comes of love when given in vain,
And yet beyond control.

IV.

O rare, sweet singer!
So nobly made, so richly dowered,
Yet withered ere thy manhood's prime, —
The almond-tree, leaf bare, but flowered,*
Without a fruitage time!
Ah, flame-like life! how soon it failed,
How soon the shell of pearl was broken!
Ah, silver tongue! that, dying, wailed,
Yet left its love unspoken!

V.

O rare, sweet singer!
I 'm glad they 've left thee all alone;
For I have made this pilgrimage
Unto thy lone memorial stone
Vague yearnings to assuage.
Ah, canst thou see these tears that fall?
Ah, canst thou hear this passionate sigh?
Thy sorrows all my thoughts inthrall, —
I mourn thy destiny.

* The tree known as the Flowering Almond, which bears beautiful pink flowers before its leaves appear, but no fruit.

VI.

O rare, sweet singer!
And must I leave thee all alone
In this Italian solitude?
The breath of flowers, the zephyr's moan,
Would suit thy delicate mood.
My wishes half conjure a face
Of beauty, spiritual and frail,
Fit dweller of this charméd place,
To which I murmur, "Vale!"

ROME, May, 1865.

THE NEW-WORLD EXILE IN ITALY.

THE most delicious skies that zone the earth
Are bluely burning into deeper night;
And those refulgent stars that haunt the South
Are flashing into sight.

The sea before me, and the hills behind, —
The vineyards in the shadow at my feet:
The wind has been among the myrtle-buds,
And with their breath is sweet.

There is a golden gleam among the green, —
The pale gold gleam of ripening Southern fruit:
The sound of love-birds, bickering in their nests,
Blends with a far-off lute.

And down the rocky, jasmine-latticed path,
That leadeth to the orange avenue,

Comes with free steps a stately, brown-faced girl,
In peasant kirtle blue.

And the red token of the Phrygian cap
Upon some passing fisher's classic head —
The graceful symbol of lost Liberty,
That serves him in her stead —

Reminds me that the place whereon I stand
Is the world's Eden of ideal delight,
Where slip away the years on velvet feet,
Unhurt by frostful blight.

O clime of Love and land of wonderment,
Where the sun ripeneth the blood to fire!
Compared to thine, a cold land's life is but
An underfed desire.

Here the cool silence of untroubled rest,
Or unrest sweeter, laps the odorous nights;
And all thy days are full of sun and song,
And set with pleasant sights.

I, a pale shadow, haunting these delights,
Not for the love of Beauty do I keep
My tristful watch, but that my heart awakes,
And will not let me sleep.

There is a fever burning in my blood,
There is a tumult throbbing in my brain;
The loveliness of this Italian night
Awakes but passionate pain.

O Italy ! thou dear heart's Paradise,
That takest the exile to thy cradling arms !
Forgive me if I cannot all forget
My sorrow in thy charms.

Thou art not dearer than mine own dear land,
Albeit she proved a harsher nurse to me ;
And now that I am banished from her shores,
She hath forgotten me.

I gave her all, — I had not much to give ;
I laid my youth's endeavor at her shrine,
Forgot the ties of blood, the love of friends,
To make her sorrows mine.

I watched with her throughout her trial-night,
And never faltered 'mid its deepest dark :
Not any grief that paled her wasted face
But touched me with its mark.

What did I ask of her ? To take a gift.
She let it fall from out her listless hand ;
She did not want the heart, the will, the brain,
That waited her command.

I was not counted worthy in her sight ;
Not all my love could buy a moment's thought ;
And at her feet neglected fell the gift
At which my youth had wrought.

I know it was not worthy her desert, —
I know the giver lacked the master's skill ;

The hasty hand was all too young to do
The eager worker's will.

And yet one smile would not have cost her dear,
Where so much love and fealty plead for grace :
She gave it not ; my young ambition found
No favor in her face.

So, when her woe was past, and she put on
The festal garments of her joy again,
I left her, for she had no need of me
When she was past her pain.

For she hath come again to summer hours,
And hath enow of flatterers and friends ;
And they who left her in her perilous shifts
Haste now to make amends.

Let her forget me ! But, O, let her not
Forget what hero-blood endows her earth,
And not forego the charter hardly earned,
For things of little worth !

For me, I waste beneath the weary load
Of withering hopes and unfulfilled desires ;
Ambitions, aspirations, memories, — all
Are self-consuming fires.

But the slow moon comes up from out the sea,
Languid and large and stately in her place,
And shames this weakliness she sees in me
By her unmovéd face !

ISLAND OF ISCHIA, July, 1866.

A LOVE-SONG OF SORRENTO.

COME away to the shade of the citron grove,
Carina!
I hear the voice of the brooding dove,
Carina!
Her soft throat swells as she tells her love
To her tender mate in the myrtle above,
And their tremulous pinions responsive move,
Cara! Carina!

Ah! Love is sweet as the spring is sweet,
Carina!
For me thou makest the spring complete,
Carina!
The young wind bloweth unto thy feet
A drift of flowers thy steps to meet,
And the wounded blossoms perfume the heat,
Cara! Carina!

They are tokens for only a bride to wear,
Carina!
Yet I would crown thee if I might dare,
Carina!
Ah! shy and sweet and tender and rare,
Put away from thine eyes thy shining hair.
Nay, now, have I startled thee unaware?
Cara! Carina!

My heart is lying across thy way,
Carina!
As thou crushest the flowers, wilt thou crush it, — say,
Carina?
Or, sadder yet, wilt thou let it stay
Where it is lying, well away,
All on this pleasant morning in May?
Cara! Carina!

My beautiful flower of flowers! No,
Carina!
Thou wilt not scorn it nor crush it so,
Carina!
One true little word before we go;
Close, — nestle close, — and whisper low, —
Low while the faint south breezes blow,
Cara! Carina!

Thou 'lt wear nothing but white when we are wed,
Carina!
Thou 'lt have orange-blossoms about thy head,
Carina!
The maidens shall string them on silver thread;
On a rose-leaf carpet thou shalt tread,
While the bride-blush maketh thy beauty red,
Cara! Carina!

SORRENTO, 1868.

TO HIM WHOSE NAME SIGNIFIES A BLESSING.*

KING! because thou art an honest man,†
And worthily dost wear Castruccio's sword,
I count thee with my heroes, spite of all
The vicious tongues that so despoil thy fame,
Despite the eyes that only see thy spots;
Yet need is that the ground-work must be bright,
Or else they could not see the spots so clearly!
And need is that the spots be rare exceptions,
Or else they could not so well counted be!
And others may — but I — I never can
Forget thou art the first Italian king
That hath not sold his people's liberty,
Or given it over to some tyrant pope,
Or let it slip from out a careless keep.
Let others, if they will, forget these things;
But I must hold them in my memory,
And bless thee for them, for Italia's sake!

THREE SYMBOLS.

THEY bore to an island in the sea
One, an exile lone,
Who made and spake these parables three
When his hope had flown:

* Victor Emanuel: God with us in victory.

† "Il re galant'uomo," the people call him.

A wind-harp swelled into perfect song
'Neath Zephyrs' soft touch;
But Boreas did it a grievous wrong,
For he smote it too much.
He smote it so rudely, its delicate chords
Wailed in eloquent pain,
Saying in plaintive and mystical words,
We accord not again!

A lark sprang up from the dewy corn
With an arching throat,
Greeting the light of the blushing morn
With a proud, sweet note.
With his eye on the sun and his heart in his song,
He parted the air;
"We shall reach it," he said, "though the way be long."
But his fate met him there!

The nightingale sat 'mid the milk-white blooms
With her breast on the thorn,
Making melodious the fragrant glooms
Till the day should be born.
In a rapture divine of joy and pain
Swelled the faithful breast;
But the thorn went too deep to come out again,
Thus exultingly pressed!

O ravished lyre! and O wounded wing!
And O breathless throat!
Is it worthy — the shattered life I bring —
To follow your note?

Sweet mother Italy ! Give me rest !
For I sing no more ;
The thorn has pierced me too deep in the breast,
And my mounting is o'er.

CAPRI, August 12, 1867.

LOVER'S LEAVES.

TO MY RIGHTFUL READERS.

VENTUROUS boy and curious girl,
Glancing shyly through the roses,
Each at other's conscious face,
While you tie your April posies, —
You are looking out for Love,
Having nothing else to do ;
While you wait for him to come,
Read what here is writ for you !

Ye, whose feet at last have found
Pathways lined with Passion Flowers,
And whose hearts are in revolt
At the shortness of the hours, —
See, as in a mirror here,
Much of what you think and do.
Lovers' lives are all akin ;
Therefore this is writ for you !

You, who know so well the taste
Of the bitter, after sweet ;

And who time no more your steps
To the steps of other feet, —

Memory, not less sweet than sad,
Turns the page without ado ;
You have time enough to read
What is written here for you !

LOVER'S LEAVES.

A RHYME OF THE MAPLE-TREE.

A BROWN-WINGED bird is singing
High up in the maple-tree ;
Out loud, with a pretty bravery
To his sole self singeth he,
While the reddened leaves are falling
Fast down from the maple-tree.

A brown-haired girl is sitting
Now under the maple-tree ;
In a voice like smitten silver
To her sole self plaineth she,
And her tears are falling, falling,
Like the leaves from the maple-tree.

The sunshine comes to kiss her
All under the maple-tree.
Her cheeks are like wood-roses ;
She 's fair enough for three,
But she has no heart to listen
To the bird in the maple-tree.

For she has shamed her sweetheart
All under the maple-tree,
"And there is not one other
Who truly loveth me!
We shall sit no more together
Low under this maple-tree!"

He listens close behind her
All under the maple-tree.
He 's jealous of the sunshine,
He will not let her be;
On two the leaves are falling
Fast from the maple-tree.

She 's shy, but he is master
All under the maple-tree.
First tears, then smiles and kisses;
In sooth, 't is fine to see!
And her heart goes singing, singing,
With the bird in the maple-tree.

1871.

TROTH-PLIGHT.

AT first I thought God would have let me
Bring thee the freshness of my day;
So, haply, having earlier met me,
I might have gladdened more thy way!
So would our lives have grown together,
Sharing in common every weather;
Ah! then I did not know that we must wait, —
Must wait!

And what impulsive songs I sung thee
With morning's flush upon my brow !
What kisses from my mouth I flung thee, —
My lips are pale and pensive now !
Till said I, "Must I call forever ?
And will he answer never, never ?"
It was so hard to learn that I must wait, —
Must wait !

In the dark night my pride was broken ;
I lay down mutely on my face,
And tears revealed what was not spoken, —
I found thee not in any place !
My soul was full of grievous wonder,
My heart-strings almost swelled asunder ;
I thought that I could die, but could not wait, —
Not wait !

Then other hands were held out to me,
And others whispered, "I am he !"
And other lovers came to woo me ;
And yet thy face I could not see.
Then said I, "I shall never meet him ;
God wills that I should never greet him."
And for a little I forgot to wait, —
To wait !

But swift and bitter came repayment, —
The fruit hung withered on the tree, —
And I must come in spotted raiment,
A traitor to my heart and thee.

I am not worthy thy caressing,
For I have forfeited such blessing.
Canst thou forgive me that I could not wait, —
Not wait?

Thou wilt, — since I have found no flavor
In all the gifts that others gave;
Their richness but provoked disfavor;
And if I die upon thy grave,
Know, that amid my faithless trifling
I had no power my heart for stifling.
Let me yet prove to thee that I can wait, —
Can wait!

Ah! let no comelier form inthrall thee
By reason of its rarer grace.
Canst thou not hear my spirit call thee?
Hast thou no visions of my face?
Doth never passionate want come o'er thee?
Lookest never wistfully before thee,
To where I stand within the vail and wait?
Then wait!

1870.

ONE KISS BEFORE WE PART.

ONE kiss before we part!
But one, for love's sweet sake!
To sweeten, for my heart,
The pain of this mistake.

Your hand is in my own,
  But your head is turned away ;
For the first time and the last,
  One little kiss, I pray !

Nay, though you love me not,
  And stab me, saying "Friend !"
Nay, though I be forgot
  Before a fortnight's end ;
Still, let me kiss the lips
  That traitors are to love.
What ! nothing but your hand,
  And that within its glove ?

Because the Past was sweet,
  Because you are so dear,
Because no more we meet
  In any future year, —
Be kind, and make me glad,
  Just for a moment's space.
Think ! I shall be so sad,
  And never see your face !

One kiss before we part !
  And so you nothing meant ?
Though I be gone, your heart
  Will keep its old content.
Nay, not your cheek, — your lips ;
  I claim them as my right —
Small guerdon for great love —
  Before we say good night.

Ah! shy, uplooking eyes!
Not true, though blue and rare,
How dare you feign surprise
To know I hold you dear?
What coyness will not yield,
Yet boldness, sure, may take;
Well, then; if not for Love's,
One kiss for Friendship's sake!

One kiss before we part!
One little kiss, my dear!
One kiss — to help my heart
Its utter loss to bear.
One kiss — to check the tears
My manhood scarce can stay;
Or thus — I make it "Yes!"
While you are saying "Nay!"

1869.

ENTRE NOUS.

AS we two slowly walked that night,
Silence fell on us, as of fear;
I was afraid to face the light,
Lest you should see that I loved you, dear.

You drew my arm against your heart,
So close I could feel it beating near;
You were brave enough for a lover's part, —
You were so sure that I loved you, dear.

Then you murmured a word or two,
And tenderly stooped your listening ear ;
For you thought that all that you had to do
Was to hear me say that I loved you, dear.

But, though your face was so close to mine
That you touched my cheek with your chestnut hair,
I would n't my lips to yours resign ;
And yet — I loved you, — I loved you, dear.

And all at once you were cold and pale,
Because you thought that I did not care ;
I cried a little behind my veil, —
But that was because I loved you, dear.

And so you thought 't was a drop of rain
That splashed your hand ? But 't was a tear ;
For then you said you 'd never again
Ask me to say that I loved you, dear.

Well ! I will tell, — if you 'll listen now.
I thought of the words you said last year ;
How we girls were n't coy enough, and how
There were half a dozen that loved you, dear.

And I was afraid that you held me light,
And an imp at my shoulder said, " Beware !
He 's just in a wooing mood to-night."
So I would n't say that I loved you, dear.

Not though I thought you the Man of men,
Chiefest of heroes, brave and rare ;

Not though I never shall love again
Any man as I loved you, dear.

I have suffered, and so have you ;
And to-night, if you were but standing here,
I 'd make you an answer straight and true,
If you 'd ask again if I loved you, dear.

1870.

REFUSAL.

THE dew is off of the full-blown rose,
And the wind will flout it before he goes ;
And the down is brushed from the yellow peach ;
And the purplest grapes are out of reach, —
And I am as sad as sad can be
That one sweet thing is no more for me !

Dear, my friend ! it is none of these !
For after the wind will come the bees ;
And the peach that ripens toward the South
Is just as sweet for an eager mouth, —
But I am as sad as sad can be,
For a sweeter thing is no more for me !

Shall I pluck for you the bloomy grapes,
Or the emerald figs of luscious shapes ?
No ! you but ask to kiss my hand —
Only to love me where I stand ;

And I am as sad as sad can be
That these sweet things are not for me!

Why will you make me say it twice?
Leave my life to its own device.
Ah! you say that my hand is cold;
I say that my heart is numb and old —
I say, I am sad as sad can be
That Love, sweet Love! is no more for me!

But I? — I would love you if I could!
I would nestle to you in tender mood;
I am so weary of living alone,
I needs must make this piteous moan.
My soul is famished so utterly
For the one sweet thing that is lost to me!

You should have come in the Long Ago,
Before my heart went under the snow;
You should have come while the daisies bloomed,
Ere the sweet blush-roses were all entombed, —
Before I was sad as sad could be,
And Love, sweet Love! was the world to me!

Now, for the good I should receive
I have so little left to give!
I am ashamed that your love should lie
Low at the feet of such as I, —
Let me be sad as sad can be
That this sweet thing is not for me!

Kiss me but once upon the brow!
Promise to be my friend from now!
Pity me that I cannot love;
Pity me, all the world above —
Leave me, as sad as sad can be,
For the one sweet thing that is lost to me!

1870.

TWO SONGS OF ONE SINGER.

I.

COULEUR DE ROSE.

HEN he told me that he loved me,
'T was the flowery time of May;
I put roses in my ringlets,
And went singing all the day,
When he told me that he loved me
In the pleasant month of May.

Still he told me that he loved me
In the summer time of June,
When the roses blushed the redder,
And the birds were all in tune;
And I blushed, because he loved me,
Redder than the rose of June!

Yes, because I knew he loved me
I went singing with the birds.

All the day I listened to him,
In my dreams I heard his words;
Dreaming nightly that he loved me,
I was blither than the birds!

But I did not know I loved him
Till I found one summer day
That in telling how he loved me
He had wiled my heart away,—
Just by saying how he loved me
Through the long, bright summer day.

Still he told me that he loved me
When the roses, fading, fell,
And the birds had all forgotten
That sweet song I 'd learned too well.
For I love him, and he loves me,
More than any words can tell.

II.

HERS OR MINE?

My sweetheart's eyes, they 're bonny and blue,
Ah me!
But he 's slow to wed who was swift to woo,
Ah me!
Am I less tender, or is he less true?

Down in the valley, a year ago,
Ah me!
He plucked me a lily as fresh as snow,
Ah me!
And he kissed me as never he 'd let me go.

But the lily leaves fell out of my hair,
Ah me!
Or ever his hand had fastened it there,
Ah me!
And a brown bird twittered "Beware! beware!"

We stood together again to-day,
Ah me!
Just where he kissed into Yes my Nay,
Ah me!
He hung his head and had naught to say.

Mignon's eyes have a sunny shine,
Ah me!
And Mignon's cheeks are fresher than mine,
Ah me!
For I get paler because I pine.

The dove has forgotten his last-year's nest,
Ah me!
And it 's his new love that he loves the best,
Ah me!
My heart lies like a stone in my breast.

1869.

DOUBLE REDS.

SHE had one within her hair
And another on her breast.
We two saw the moon come up,
And the sun go down the west.

Pale, soft ripples, blown about
The young beauty of her head,
And their brownness lighted up
By one spicy Double Red!

She looked off across the sea.
"Sweets unto the sweet!" I said;
All the longing of my looks
Bent upon the Double Red.

That was in her hair, you know;
Kissing one, I kissed the twain.
She looked up into my face,
Half in pleasure, half in pain.

I had only kissed a flower
Lying loosely in her hair;
I had only smiled, and said
It was fit for her to wear!

But her hand was in my hand,—
One was flame, the other snow,—

And my eyes possessed her eyes,
With a "Yes" supplanting "No!"

Ah! I had not meant to ask;
I had told myself to wait.
But you know what falls when two
Walk upon the beach so late.

"No! you shall not run away!—
Tender, trembling little thing!
(Am I worthy to detain
This white bird upon the wing?)"

But the flower upon her breast
Drowned me in its deep perfume,
Drew me to the velvet glow
Of its Oriental bloom.

"Let us go!" I heard her say
'Twixt the clock-strokes telling nine;
But the flower dropped from her breast,
Like a message, into mine!

"Match for me the flower, Sweet!
Give the other from your hair!"
I had meant to ask no more;
But her face was over-fair.

"Nay! I will have all or none!"
'Twixt my hands I took her head;
Sweetest of the three her mouth's
Darling, dainty Double Red!

1870.

QUITS.

I AM the victor, Philip May!
You knew it the moment we met to-night.
You had not looked for such easy grace,
For our parting left me crushed and white.
My lips were curved in a quiet smile;
You had seen them stiffen with sudden pain.
Did you think, as you searched my eyes the while,
Of the times they had looked for you in vain?

Did they tell you the story you hoped to read?
The tale of a lingering love for you;
Why did you quail and falter so
'Neath the level ray of their frozen blue?
Why did you drop your faultless voice
To the tender tone of the olden strain?
You cannot recall the early trust
Whose delicate life by scorn was slain!

You 're foiled for once, my King of Hearts!
Mine was too high to break for you.
I might have loved you long and well,
Had I proved you noble and good and true.
But when I saw that the thing I loved
Was not you, but my soul's Ideal, —
When I knew you selfish and hard and cold, —
I had no fealty for the Real.

You are not my master any more!
Your thrall of the olden time is free.
The broken wing of the bird is healed,
And I scorn your pliant tongue and knee.
Have you forgotten your spoken words?
I shall remember them till I die;
My heart went down in the dust to you,
And low in the dust you let it lie!

You have mistaken me all the while;
I do not miss you nor want you now!
The lesson you taught me is potent yet,
Though it left no line on my open brow.
Clever player, of cunning touch,
The chords are jangled and will not chime!
Well, are the throbs of a tortured heart
Set to the flow of a pleasant rhyme?

But God, he knows that I had no hope
Ever to lure you back again;
And the wish went out with the Long Ago,
And never can come to me again.
How dared you dream you were dear to me,
Or speak of things that you should forget?
I blush to think a kiss of yours
Ever upon my mouth was set!

The love that I bore you, Philip May,
Nearly killed me ere it died;
But one dark night the stubborn thing
Was sternly stifled and pushed aside;

And the arms of a true love took in me,
Whom you left to moan at your heart's shut door ;
I 'm clothed about with his tenderness,
And wrapped from loneness evermore !

LOVE ENTANGLED.

HEY were loitering along
'Neath a roof of evergreen,
Dropping now and then a word,
With long pauses set between.

"Here are violets !" and she stooped
For the little purple flower.
"O, how many ! I could pluck
Double handfuls in an hour !"

He held out his hand for one,
Only asking with his eyes ;
And she flushed to find her own
All too ready with replies.

So she lightly turned aside,
"Here is love entangled too !"
"Well, is that," he lightly asked,
"Something very rare and new ?"

"He is trifling !" and the girl
Held at once her heart in thrall.
"He shall see I will not come,
Fetch and carry at his call !"

When he, pressing nearer, said,
"Were you ever tangled in it?"
"No, I think not. — Wintergreen!
I can get it in a minute."

In that little minute's space
He revoked his little plan.
"'T is n't me," he sourly said;
"Likely 't is some other man!"

Walking home at set of sun,
What was this had come between?
Each one sad and silent thought
Of the thing that might have been.

When he went away she laid
The young violets aside,
But the love entangled threw
From the window, open wide.

Ah! the flower she would not keep
Was the emblem of the thing!
Love entangled mostly thrives
In the lovers' early spring!

1872.

THE DOOR BETWEEN.

KNOW that it was mine own hand that shut it
And locked it, — but I threw away the key,
And so the door can nevermore be opened
That stands so grimly betwixt you and me.

Though sometimes I have fancied that I heard you
Pleading and knocking on the other side,
I would not answer, for my heart was sullen,
And made so cruel by my wounded pride.

And there are hours when I have knelt beside it,
Anigh to death for just one word from you;
And you, in turn, were proud and would not answer
For anything that I could say or do.

And sometimes when I lie 'twixt sleep and waking,
I think the door swings back to let you in;
But when I spring to give you eager welcome,
I only meet the ghost of What has Been!

And often in my sleep my heart is asking,
"Where is the key? Alas! where is the key?"
And I arise and vainly try to open
The closéd door that is 'twixt you and me!

1871.

AFRAID.

AFTER singing, silence; after roses, thorns;
All the blackest midnights built o'er golden mornings;
After flowering, fading; bitter after sweet;
Yellow, withered stubble, after waving wheat.

After green, the dropping of the shrivelled leaf,
Like the sudden lopping of some dear belief;

After gurgling waters, dry, unsightly beds ;
After exultation, lowly-hanging heads.

So I shrink and shiver at your proffered kiss,
Knowing pain must follow on the heel of bliss ;
Knowing loss must find me sleeping on your breast :
Leave me while you love me, — this is surely best !

Like a blushless flower left upon its stem,
Sweetening the thickness of the forest's hem ;
Like a hidden fountain, never touched of lips ;
Like an unknown ocean, never sailed by ships, —

Thus I shall be fairer to your untried thought,
Than if all my living into yours were wrought.
Hearts' dreams are the sweetest in a lonely nest :
Leave me while you love me, — this is surely best !

1871.

ET TU ?

S this the end of all these years ?
Must we be strangers now, we two ?
Find you such sweetness in my tears,
That you should choose this thing to do ?
That you should smite me unawares,
And hate me when you find me true, —
Is this the fruit your loving bears ?
I had not thought so ill of you !

Ah! looking deep into your eyes,
I thought to read you through and through!
Ah! listening to your stanch replies,
How confidence and fealty grew!
Remembering 't is your hand that tries
Our ancient compact to undo,
My blood is frozen with surprise, —
I had not thought so ill of you!

Perhaps a prouder heart than mine
Might lift a face of brighter hue,
Perhaps a bitterer heart than mine
Might wish some evil fate to you,
Perhaps a harder heart than mine
By word or deed might make you rue;
But I shall leave you this one sign:
I had not thought so ill of you!

1872.

YOU AND I!

E have plighted troth forever, —
You and I!
We have sworn no fate shall sever, —
You and I!
Young and poor, — uncaring whether
Life bring storm or sunny weather,
So we only stand together, —
You and I!

We 've no hoard of crested greatness, —
You and I!
Naught of Wealth's nor Pride's elateness, —
You and I!
Spirits fitted for endeavor,
Toil our only worldly lever,
And a faith that faileth never, —
You and I!

Prudent friends may frown upon us, —
You and I!
Say that loving has undone us, —
You and I!
Say 't is little less than madness,
Thriftless marriages bring sadness ;
But they cannot cloud our gladness, —
You and I!

O, we envy not another, —
You and I!
We 're the world unto each other, —
You and I!
Perfect love, that knows no measure,
This our only earthly treasure ;
And we ask no other pleasure, —
You and I!

All the wide world is before us, —
You and I!
And a tender Father 's o'er us, —
You and I!

Hand in hand, uncaring whether
Life bring storm or sunny weather,
We will face its cares together, —
You and I!

1860.

SOMEBODY KNOWS.

OW do I feel? I am fresh as the morning, —
Happy and gay as its first early bird!
Why do you look such prudential warning?
I have n't said one exceptional word.
What was I doing last night in the garden?
It was near twelve when I entered the hall?
O my severe, inconsiderate warden!
Why, if you wanted me, could n't you call?
Why did I slyly steal out to the arbor,
Leaving you sole, to a comforting doze?
I cannot tell you! I shall not tell you!
I never will tell you, — but Somebody knows!

O, what a pity that you were so sleepy!
Saw me come in? Is it really true?
So, my good aunt, you were playing Miss Peepy?
Well, now! I really wonder at you!
But — do you know that the full moon was shining?
O, do you know that the world was abloom,
In the cool arms of the midnight reclining,
Trying to hide from the swift-coming gloom?
This is n't what you would like me to tell you?
There is a secret, I see you suppose;

But I shall not tell you! I cannot tell you!
I never will tell you, — but Somebody knows!

So you are sure that two people were talking
Under the porch, where the sweetbrier grows?
So you are sure that two people were walking
In the green alley that borders the close?
O, but the night was surrendered to sweetness!
O, but the skies were so kind and so blue!
O, but my life was abrim with completeness, —
Glad as the rose in its dower of dew!
This is n't what you have asked me to tell you, —
But this is the way that the narrative goes:
I cannot tell you! I shall not tell you!
I never will tell you, — but Somebody knows!

What do you say about conscience and blushes?
The sunset will tinge the most virginal snow;
If the rose I sat under has lent me its flushes,
Where is the harm, I am wanting to know?
The purplish mist loves the breast of the mountain,
The honey-bee clings to the heart of the flower,
The sunbeam illumines the spray of the fountain,
Each spirit inherits one exquisite hour!
Concerning the thing that you ask me to tell you:
Ask the white calla the way that it grows!
For I cannot tell you! I shall not tell you!
I never will tell you, — but Somebody knows!

Sharp spinster eyes, growing dewy and dreamy, —
So did you look, when you were but a girl!

I can believe your complexion was creamy,
That the sunlight was prisoned in each little curl!
You have some love-waif to keep and remember;
You 've been a sweetheart, though never a wife;
Looking at me, you are out of November,
Back in the May of your angular life!
Therefore you know it 's of no use to question
What was well said and done — under the rose;
For I cannot tell you! I shall not tell you!
I never will tell you, — but Somebody knows!

1871.

DIANA.

CAST not my way those superficial eyes,
Where no sweet languor lies,
In whose wide glance thy shallow thoughts arise,
As clear as speeched replies:
They lack the grace of grace, — the charm
Of mirrored memories!

What if beneath each violet-veinéd lid
Such sumptuous hints lie hid
Of sensualized sapphire, diamonded
With flashings that forbid
The eyes of timid men to read
Their tinselries amid?

Huntress of men! I spell thy trade aright!
Thou standest, in my sight,

Poor, 'mid the physical gifts that make thee bright,
And bare of heart's delight:
What wilt thou do when cometh Age's
Black, despondent night?

False goddess! what have I to do with thee?
Pass on and let me be!
We have no twin-impulses, such as we;
My gifts thou shalt not see
Upon thy crowded altar,
Fair Impotency!

Thou knowest the sound of laughter; never moan
To thee comes, spirit-blown;
But, only for thy smiling, thou art stone!
Pass on! pass on!
Joy in thy sensuous bloom, and move
To tinkling mirth alone!

I would not blame thee for thy bearing cold,
If its smooth ice did hold
Something to win — some underthought, untold —
And not gross greed of gold,
And soul-degrading needs,
And trickeries manifold.

If but a worthier heart were manifest!
If to that classic breast —
So coldly classic, 'neath thy silken vest —
Might even yet be prest
That Prince of Men whose love to thee
Were all and best!

It will not ever be ! nor thou outgo
  Or break the hedgéd row,
By frivolous living fostered, sure and slow ;
  Thou canst not overthrow
The social frauds that round about thee
  Rankly grow.

Thou of the goddess-front ! thou, Circe-limbed and rare !
  Thou, made for men's despair !
Thou white voluptuousness, unshrunk by care !
  Ah, fair ! ah, false as fair !
Why dost thou haunt me, temptress,
  Everywhere ?

1868.

BLOSSOM-TIME.

IT was in the time of blossoms — in the fragrant time of blossoms —
When the bee came from the Southland, and the trees were getting green ;
And the earth forgot the winter, and laughed right out for gladness ;
And I heard the bluebird asking the swallow where he 'd been.

The wind, a minstrel lover, was flattering and coaxing
The shy young rose to let him unveil her virgin face, —

Just to let him lift a corner of the green and jealous
mantle
That lay betwixt his kisses and her brightly blushing
grace.

But the blue eyes of the violet had chilly tears within
them ;
And the sick heart of the violet was withering with
pain.
For the wind had been her sweetheart before the rose
awakened ;
And now he had forgotten her, and would not come
again !

And down the pleasant pathways I saw two go to-
gether, —
A young thing and her lover, — too happy to look back
To where a pale girl lingered, whose eyes went never
from them,
Whose cheeks were like the snow-drops that died in
March, — alack !

Ah, maiden ! happy maiden ! watch for the rose's burst-
ing,
And pluck it at its reddest to glow within thy hair !
And thou — O pale forsaken ! search for the withered
violet,
And hide it in thy bosom, — its fitting place is there !

1870.

ONLY HER HAND!

WHENEVER I go to my window,
And look out into the street,—
Look out across the pavement
Crowded with hurrying feet,—
My eye travels up and over
The house-fronts, dingy and dull,
That break in upon my dreaming
Of the Land of the Beautiful!

Till it reaches another window,
Just across from my own,
Where a quiet and lonely woman
Sits all day, sewing alone;
And yet I have hardly seen her;
And here, from where I stand,
I only know she is sewing
By the motion of her hand!

Well, hers is an attic window,
So she sits close to the light;
And her hands are so near the casement
I can see they are frail and white;
With a ring on the third slim finger
Of the left,—so small and alert.
I think: "Is she weary of sewing?
Does she know the Song of the Shirt?"

And what has become of the lover
Who came and wooed and won?
I see no man sit by her,
When her day's work 's over and done.
I think that she is a widow,
From the glimpse I get of her gown;
But she sits in the shade of the curtain,
With her amber braids bent down!

And I can't get a good look at her
For all that I ever can do!
There 's only her pale, proud profile, —
And I guess that her eyes are blue!
She never stands at the window,
To look down into the street,
Nor across at the opposite houses,
Or maybe our eyes would meet!

She has a pot of geranium
And mignonette on the sill,
And a cross is hung in one corner, —
Ah, hers is a cross to kill!
And to think I have never seen her,
Save here from where I stand;
But I 'm sure if I ever meet her,
I shall know her by her hand!

I 'd swear she 's not over twenty
From the way she turns her head;
And the cheek that is next the window
Is all of a delicate red;

And my glass has helped me discover
A ravishing little ear!
But her hand I think the most of,—
It's her hand I hold so dear!

The hand that holds the needle
That goes in and out all day,
What wouldn't I give to snatch it,
And fling it far away,
That terrible tiny needle!
And take those two little hands,
And fold them one over the other,
And kiss her where she stands?

I'm a fool, but I cannot help it.
It cuts me right to the heart,
To think of the life she's leading,
While mine is the pleasanter part;
Ah, dear little patient woman!
From the window where I stand,
I've learned to know and to love you
Only from watching your hand!

1869.

ENOLA.

WHAT shall we do for the heart that is hurt?
How shall we freshen the cheek that is pale?
Strengthen the footsteps that falter and fail,—
Brighten the eyes of Enola?

The sunshine is out of the trail of her hair,
The waist in her girdle's too slender by half;
Gone is the ravishing, low little laugh
From the blossomy mouth of Enola.

Her necklace of pearls was broken to-day;
Some fell in her bosom, and some to the ground
Slid whitely and brightly, with never a sound,
Like tears from the face of Enola.

If the lover who left her should seek her to-night,
And put back the ring that she misses the most,
It would not stay on, but slip off and be lost
From the poor little hand of Enola!

1870.

UNAWARES.

THE wind was whispering to the vines
The secret of the summer night;
The tinted oriel window gleamed
But faintly in the misty light;
Beneath it we together sat
In the sweet stillness of content.

Till from a slow-consenting cloud
Came forth Diana, bright and bold,
And drowned us, ere we were aware,
In a great shower of liquid gold;
And, shyly lifting up my eyes,
I made acquaintance with your face.

And sudden something in me stirred,
And moved me to impulsive speech,
With little flutterings between,
And little pauses to beseech,
From your sweet graciousness of mind,
Indulgence and a kindly ear.

Ah! glad was I as any bird
That softly pipes a timid note,
To hear it taken up and trilled
Out cheerily by a stronger throat,
When, free from discord and constraint,
Your thought responded to my thought.

I had a carven missal once,
With graven scenes of "Christ, his Woe."
One picture in that quaint old book
Will never from my memory go,
Though merely in a childish wise
I used to search for it betimes.

It showed the face of God in man
Abandoned to his watch of pain,
And given of his own good-will
To every weaker thing's disdain;
But from the darkness overhead
Two pitying angel eyes looked down.

How often in the bitter night
Have I not fallen on my face,
Too sick and tired of heart to ask

God's pity in my grievous case ;
Till the dank deadness of the dark,
Receding, left me, pitiless.

Then have I said : "Ah ! Christ the Lord !
God sent his angel unto thee ;
But both ye leave me to myself, —
Perchance ye do not even see ! "
Then was it as a mighty stone
Above my sunken heart were rolled.

Now, in the moon's transfiguring light,
I seemed to see you in a dream ;
Your listening face was silvered o'er
By one divinely radiant beam ;
I leant towards you, and my talk
Was dimly of the haunting past.

I took you through deep soundings where
My freighted ships went down at noon, —
Gave glimpses of deflowered plains,
Blown over by the hot Simoon ;
Then I was silent for a space :
"God sends no angel unto me ! "

My heart withdrew into itself,
When lo ! a knocking at the door :
"Am I so soon a stranger here,
Who was an honored guest before ? "
Then looking in your eyes, I knew
You were God's angel sent to me !

1870.

DISOWNED.

GO, then, and a blessing go with you,
Lost love of my sunniest days!
Though the heart that I trusted rejects me,
I shall think of you only to praise.
Though the eyes and the voice of affection
Are gifts that enrich me no more,
And I meet but the look of a stranger
Where tenderness brightened before.

If the love that I reckoned eternal
Is withered and old in a day,
I prize not the less its remembrance,
Because it hath gladdened my way;
And the scorning that seeketh to wound me
Shall meet with no scorn in return;
For the heart that is loyal forever
In faithfulness only can mourn!

And yet is it love that could doubt me?
And ah! is it love that could wound?
In the rapture of rarest affection,
How soon a dissension is found!
Go, then, in the sternness of anger,
With a bitter distrust of my truth, —
Take back such a worthless emotion,
And leave me the wrecks of my youth.

Ah, lost! but still, dearest, forgive me! —
My spirit is wrung to its core, —
Forgive me these selfish reproaches,
I shall speak to reproach you no more!
I will wait for the justification
That cometh with thought and with time;
And my life shall become an endeavor
To grow to the needs of its prime.

I know I must love you forever,
I know I must suffer a space;
Like a child, in its piteous abandon,
When it cries for its dead mother's face!
God gave us this love for the human;
Therefore it is good, and no curse.
I will strive that this trial may leave me
More tender and brave, and not worse!

1864.

AMY AT THE WINDOW.

GET you gone, O Day, so dreary!
Creep into the arms of Night!
And these scenes of wasted beauty
Let the darkness seal from sight.
Falls the rain in dirge-like cadence;
Chants the wind a woful rhyme;
And such bitter, bitter memories
Haunt the sombre winter-time!

Vain! I cannot any longer
Put away the thoughts that rise;
I have battled long and bravely, —
I have worn a proud disguise.
But to-night my heart is weary,
And my courage ebbs away
With the tears that gush so hotly, —
Ah! I kept them back to-day.

And it makes me weak to listen
To the far-off river's moan;
And my pain is always sharpest
When I find myself alone.
Awful is this gulf of silence
Stretching 'twixt your life and mine;
Let me fall and die beside it,
Rather than live on and pine!

And I lift my soul in pleading,
O, so passionate and deep!
God! if I could only cross it,
On your neck to fall and weep!
And I kneel and send my moaning
Feebly to the farther shore,
Feeling that it will not reach you, —
Feeling you are mine no more!

Yet, O lost one! I forgive you
Those last, cruel, crushing words, —
I could kiss the hand that rudely
Struck my spirit's quivering chords.

I forgive you all my anguish,
All these weary nights of woe,
And the bleakness of my Future,
All because — I love you so.

But I never, never wronged you, —
Never was in thought untrue ;
All my holiest, highest heart-throbs,
And the inmost, were for you.
When they leave me cold and silent,
When this passionate pain is past,
You will know how much I loved you, —
Know me loyal to the last !

1860.

RUSE DE GUERRE.

SO, Walter, it seems you 're offended, —
I 'll own I 've not acted quite right ;
But is the occasion sufficient
To stir up your wrath in its might ?
If you had n't appeared so excited,
If you were not so easily teased,
I should never have gone off with Charlie, —
But you knew I would do as I pleased !

Great Mogul ! am I your Sultana,
To come and to go at command ?
How you could imagine I feared you
Is a thing that I don't understand ;

If you had n't assumed *le dictateur*
With such an imperial air,
I should never have thought of offending ;
But your look, — it said, "Go if you dare!"

Shall I own that the mirth and the music
Of that night were all lost upon me ?
Even Charlie's low tones were unheeded, —
Ah ! I thought of one dearer than he !
While you were resolving to cast me
Beyond the confines of your heart,
I sighed, in the midst of rejoicing,
That you in the scene had no part.

One kind look — my heart would have softened,
One whisper — my tears had burst forth !
But your words in their bitter upbraiding, —
Ah ! they stifled regret at its birth ;
And my spirit, all tameless, rose proudly,
Indignation gave strength to each nerve :
I knew I was wrong, but, O, surely,
I 'd done nothing such wrath to deserve.

Now, Walter, you know that I love you,
In spite of the notions you take ;
And my poor heart is aching right sadly,
Yet I don't think 't is likely to break.
'T is a pity, I 'll own, — and reads badly ;
But I fear the material 's tough, —
I 'm not going to die, *mon cher* Walter,
Because — you don't love me enough !

You know you are perfectly killing!
Addie Bell is aware of it too;
She 's tender and timid and clinging,
And then — she is dying for you!
If you love her, I 'm perfectly willing
To let her slip into my place;
I never had half so much sweetness,
Nor half so much languishing grace.

So, Walter, you 're welcome to dangle
Around that "dear amiable girl";
You 're welcome to praise in my hearing
The tint and the twine of each curl;
You 're perfectly welcome to whisper
The sweetest of things — when I 'm by.
I 'm content if you find your elysium
In the light of her pretty brown eye.

You can't make me jealous, *cher* Walter!
There 's no use in trying that game;
You might die of spontaneous combustion, —
'T would be hard to put me in a flame!
So I think you had better consider.
Don't be rash, but come back while you can;
For I think — and am I mistaken? —
That you are a sensible man.

My position at present is trying;
Poor Charlie but lives in my sight.
And that handsome, distinguished Lieutenant
Was very attentive last night!

And Addie told Lou, in a whisper,
She really preferred him to you.
Ah, Walter, he 's terribly handsome,
And his eyes are so tenderly blue!

So you see how the matter stands, Walter;
'T is n't Addie with whom you 've to deal;
You can't work on me by your trifling, —
I can cleverly hide what I feel;
So if you 're pretending, you 'd better
Be wise, and come back while you can;
For I think — and am I mistaken? —
That you are a sensible man.

(*Variations in the shape of a shower of tears.*)

Come back if you love me, dear Walter;
I 'm willing to own I was wrong!
I give up, for my spirit is broken, —
I 'm missing you all the day long.
So, Walter, now, won't you consider,
And decide to come back while you can?
For I think — and am I mistaken? —
That you are a sensible man.

1859.

LAST HEART-BEATS.

SEND me — if but a rose-leaf — yet a token,
To tell me what your lips have left unspoken,
That you are sorry that my heart is broken,
Before I die.

For soon your silence will no more perplex me,
And soon your coldness will have ceased to vex me,
Although I cling unto the rock that wrecks me
Until I die.

And presently my hand will cease its grasping,
And presently my breath will cease its gasping,
And I shall sink beyond your tardy clasping,
For I shall die.

Ah! you have left me, who would never leave you,
And you have slain me, who did never grieve you;
But I? — at least, at least, I can forgive you
Before I die!

1870.

A WOMAN'S COMPLAINT.

I SAW myself in the glass to-day,
And I said, as I loosened my hair,
"O that my face were a talisman,
And he could have it to wear!"
For there is nothing that I would not give
To fetter his restless heart;
And if his tenderness ever should fail
The glory from life would part.

I should not suffer so if I knew
That he missed me any to-night;
I wonder if ever he wants me now, —
I know that it is n't right —

I know it is selfish to murmur and doubt ;
  Is he careless or cold ? O, never !
But they tell me that man forgets in an hour,
  While woman remembers forever.

I love him ! I love him with all my life !
  And I give him its choicest things ;
But he puts me into a gilded cage,
  And cripples my budding wings !
I want to be all that a woman should be,
  But he has the narrowest views ;
I want to work, and he wants me to play ;
  And he tells me to do as I choose !

To do as I choose ? I would choose to be
  Not a child, to be petted and dressed,
But his friend, — on the terms of an equal trust :
  Respected, as well as caressed.
He gives me a kiss, and he goes away,
  And that horrible office door
Shuts out the face and the voice and the hand
  That charmed him a moment before !

And if he 's troubled or sad or wronged,
  He tells me never a word :
He likens me unto a summer flower,
  Or a delicate singing-bird.
If he 'd teach me, I know I could learn
  To work with him, side by side ;
And then I could hold my head up, high,
  With a sterling womanly pride !

And so I am jealous of him I love ;
O, jealous as jealous can be :
For his lordly aims and his growing plans
Keep him afar from me.
And I sit away by myself to-night,
Dropping the bitterest tears
That have moistened the cheeks that he left unkissed,
To whiten with cruel fears !

1863.

DISARMED.

LOVE ! so sweet at first !
So bitter in the end !
Thou canst be fiercest foe,
As well as fairest friend.
Are these poor, withered leaves
The fruitage of thy May ?
Thou that wert strong to save,
How art thou swift to slay !

Ay ! thou art swift to slay,
Despite thy kiss and clasp,
Thy long, caressing look,
Thy subtle, thrilling grasp !
Ay ! swifter far to slay
Than thou art strong to save,
And selfish in thy need,
And cruel as the grave !

Yes! cruel as the grave,—
  Go! go! and come no more!
But canst thou set my heart
  Just where it was before?
Go! go! and come no more!
  Go! leave me with my tears,
The only gift of thine
  That shall outlive the years.

Yet shall outlive the years
  One other, cherished thing,
Slight as a vagrant plume
  Shed from some passing wing:—
The memory of thy first
  Divine, half-timid kiss.
Go! I forgive thee all
  In weeping over this!

1872.

A LOVE-SONG.

SWEET, sweet, sweet!
  Sweetest of hours, Beloved!
When I thought but to kiss thy feet,
  Thou hast lifted me up, Beloved!

Sweet, sweet, sweet!
  To lie in thy arms, Beloved!
And to feel the ecstatic beat
  Of thy heart of hearts, Beloved!

And sweet, sweet, sweet!
To look in thy eyes, Beloved!
And see myself there complete
As my being in thine, Beloved!

Ah, sweet, sweet, sweet!
For the rose of thy mouth, Beloved!
Thou givest my mouth to meet, —
I am come to my throne, Beloved!

1871.

FOR THE SAKE OF SINGING.

THE day when we two stood
At the gate, my heart and I, —
This side, Silence; that side, Song,
Saying, "Let us pass or die!"

On their mouths we saw their songs,
As the singers dallied by, —
This side, Silence; that side, Song, —
Exiles thence, my heart and I!

Ah, the heart was but a child's!
Ah, the child was but a waif!
And their struggle at the barrier,
Silence hid it — deep and safe.

We two lingering at the gate,
Since we might not hear to see,

Fell so deep in love with singing
That my heart sang unto me.

And I, listening to its song,
Learned to sing as well as see;
Till I sang unto my heart
As my heart sang unto me!

We, self-taught, though older grown,
Have no skill in minstrelsy.
I but sing to you the songs
That my heart sings unto me!

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